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ABSTRACT

The first of three volumes presenting a curriculum designed to help nonhandicapped students understand students with disabilities focuses on the use of literature to foster that understanding in junior and senior high. The first section examines literature in high school, and presents lessons (theme, objectives, and discussion guides) for five works of fiction: "Of Mice and Men," "Flowers for Algernon," "To Kill a Mockingbird," "I Never Promised You a Rose Garden," and "The Heart is a Lonely Hunter." The drama section provides lessons for "Richard III," "The Glass Managerie," and "The Miracle Worker." Poems are included in a separate section with selections on blindness, deafness, and physical impairment. Literature for junior high and intermediate schools is represented by fiction ("Summer of the Swans," "Deenie," and "Listen for the Fig Tree"), nonfiction ("Karen" and "Tom Sullivan's Adventures in Darkness") and poems about deafness and physical impairment. (CL)

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A CURRICULUM TO FOSTER UNDERSTANDING OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

THE HANDICAPPED IN LITERATURE

The University of the State of New York
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office for Education of Children
with Handicapping Conditions
Albany, New York 12234

April, 1981

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The field test version of this curriculum was also reviewed by 11 young adults with disabilities. We wish to thank them for their assistance.

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Introduction *

This guide was written to aid teachers of English literature in the junior and senior high schools in teaching about persons with disabilities. Literature throughout the ages has contained characters with various disabilities, physical, mental and emotional. These characterizations very often reflected the myths, prejudices and stereotypic thinking about the handicapped prevalent in society at the time when the literature was produced. During the last decade a major change has taken place in our society in regard to the disabled, with a strong emphasis being placed upon their acceptance into the mainstream of life.

In the context of the re-evaluation of our perceptions and treatment of the disabled, attention has turned to an analysis of how such persons were treated in literature. Preliminary work in this area shows a mass of characterizations that are antipathetic to the view of persons with disabilities as fully human and as potentially competent, active, contributing members of society (Baskin and Harris, 1977).
Throughout literature we find characterizations of the disabled as objects of dread and as menaces. Who can forget Rochester's mad wife in Jane Eyre, that ghastly, savage lunatic, more beast than human being. And what of Quasimodo whose ugliness could scare away whole detachments of soldiers in the daytime, and from whose visage breeding women hid. Richard III, so says Shakespeare , was by nature unsuited for goodness because of his twisted body. Deformed bodies were portrayed as reflections of deformed souls.

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*The use of this guide is to be preceded by the teacher orientation activities detailed in the Staff Orientation Manual.

Not all of the portrayals of the disabled in literature were so obviously negative. But even the portrayal of disabled individuals as seers or prophets, or as holy innocents set them apart from other persons. The handicapped were portrayed as different and apart from people in the mainstream of life.

A basic premise of this curriculum is that awareness of stereotypes, prejudices and fears--those which we already have and those to which we are continuously exposed in literature--is a first step in overcoming these impediments to acceptance and integration of persons with disabilities.

The goals of this guide, therefore, are:

(1) To develop awareness on the part of English teachers of the beliefs about the disabled being communicated in the literature which they now assign to their students.

(2) To develop knowledge and skill on the part of English teachers in making their students aware of the beliefs transmitted about the disabled in the literature being read.

(3) To develop in English teachers knowledge and skill in presenting contrasting points of views about the disabled in literature and in classroom treatment of literature.

(4) To develop in students a heightened awareness of the beliefs, myths and stereotypes about the disabled in the literature to which they are exposed.

(5) To develop in students a better understanding of the disabled.

(6) To make students aware of how society contributed to the poor functioning of persons with disabilities.

(7) To make students aware of recent changes in treatment of and attitudes toward the disabled.

Two major strategies of literature selection have been pursued in this project. The first was to identify literature currently being used in secondary schools in which handicapped characters were of importance, and to show how this literature could be treated to avoid the perpetuation of negative stereotypes and myths. The second was to identify recent literature which portrayed the disabled in a realistic way, a way which was consonant with the view of the disabled as fully accepted members of society, and to show how this literature could be used. Books available in paperback form were given preference in this second category.

The lessons in this guide are not meant to be complete treatments of the literature studied. They focus specifically on the disabled characters involved, and on the effects of the disabilities. These lessons are designed to supplement the activities, approaches and ideas which English teachers who are not specialists in the area of disabilities might ordinarily use.

A question may arise in the minds of some teachers as to whether literature about the disabled should be presented in classes which contain pupils with disabilities. The general answer to this questions is "yes." Literature is filled with characters who have handicapping conditions. Many of the allusions to disabled persons in literature are negative. These negative portrayals were accepted. It is time to study them, to question them, to present other kinds of portrayals. Such action aids and supports the acceptance of individuals with disabilities. Many students with disabilities will recognize this and welcome such study, even if they themselves are not yet ready to participate actively in first hand, personal references or classroom discussions.

On the other hand, a teacher must always be sensitive to the individuals in his/her charge. If a teacher feels that a particular book or other piece of literature may be too hard for a particular disabled student to handle, the teacher must take steps to prevent undue stress for this pupil. Such steps may mean not using a particular book at all or making it an optional, individual assignment. At no time, however, should the disabled student be excluded from classroom activities dealing with disability. This would defeat the goal of using curriculum to foster acceptance and integration.

The enclosed lesson plans include discussion guides in which questions and statements are provided for teachers. Teachers may choose to use them verbatim or only refer to them for guidance. They are meant to be suggestive and helpful but not in any way limiting.

The Handicapped in Fiction

Table 1 presents the novels selected for focus in this curriculum.

Table 1

Fiction

Category of Disability	Author	Title	Level	
			HS	Jr.H
Mental Retardation	Keyes	FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON	X	
Mental Retardation	Steinbeck	OF MICE AND MEN	X	
Mental Retardation	Byars	SUMMER OF THE SWANS*		7th & 8th
Emotional/Mental Retardation	Lee	TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD	X	
Emotional Disturbance	Greenberg	I NEVER PROMISED YOU A ROSE GARDEN	X	
Blindness	Mathis	LISTEN FOR THE FIG TREE	10th	X
Deafness	McCullers	THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER	X	
Physical Impairment	Blume	DEENIE		X

*Appropriate for pupils with fifth or sixth grade reading levels.

All of the books listed as at the senior high school level in Table 1 are currently being used in some high schools in New York State, or are books about which questions have been asked on recent New York State Regents Examinations in English. It was not possible to identify novels including the disabled which were currently in wide use at the junior high school level. Therefore, the books listed for this level were selected to represent the best fiction available on the disabled which was appropriate to the 12-14 year old age group, and which was available in paperback form. "Best" is defined in this context as providing realistic portrayals of disabled individuals, their families and persons interacting with them. Best also refers to the portrayal of disabled individuals as human beings who sense and feel and strive, and who are sometimes competent in spite of disabilities and society's reaction to them.

Not all of the good books identified could be used as the basis of lessons developed in this curriculum. Some books were not selected for focus because they were only available in hardcover. Others were not included because they dealt with a disability already covered by another novel selected for focus. At the end of the introductory section of this guide is a list of additional pieces of fiction considered valuable. In some cases items from this list can be substituted for books selected for focus in the curriculum.

The Handicapped in Drama

Three plays were selected for focus in this curriculum. Richard III by Shakespeare and The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams both deal with physical impairment and its effects. Both are frequently read by senior high school students. The Miracle Worker by Gibson is a play about Helen Keller's teacher and how she reached a bright deaf/blind child who had no means of communication. It is appropriate for 9th-12th grade.

Additional plays are listed in the supplementary bibliography at the end of the introduction.

The Handicapped in Poetry

Poems selected for focus are listed in Table 2.
Some of these are by well known poets such as Milton and Wordsworth; others by lesser known poets represented in anthologies; and still others by a disabled person striving to express himself through poetry. From a strictly literary point of view the poems vary in quality, but all of them are rich in possibilities for teaching and learning about persons with disabilities.

Table 2

Poetry

Category of Disability	Author	Title	Level	
			HS	Jr.H
Blindness	Berry	A MUSIC*	X	9th
Blindness	Blades	OUT OF BLINDNESS	X	9th
Blindness	Levertov	A SOLITUDE	X	9th
Blindness	Milton	ON HIS BLINDNESS*	X	
Blindness	Morris	HAVING EYES THAT SEE	X	9th
Deafness	Madsen	YOU HAVE TO BE DEAF TO UNDERSTAND	X	X
Deafness	Wright	MUTTERINGS OVER THE CRIB OF A DEAF CHILD	X	
Physical Impairment	Stafford	THE BASEBALL MANAGER AND THE WARM-UP JACKET		X
Physical Impairment	Stafford	DAYS OF MEMORY	X	X
Physical Impairment.	Thomas	THE HUNCHBACK IN THE PARK*	X	

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*Supplementary.

The Handicapped in Biography and Other Nonfiction

Only two books were selected for focus in this section of the curriculum. A number of reasons accounts for this limited selection. Some of the better biographies are out-of-print. Others are available only in hardcover editions. Commonly used biographies of some well-known persons with disabilities have not been included because they present a super hero image of the disabled which sets them apart from other people. Helen Keller was quite different from most people because of the severity of her impairment. The deaf/blind population represents a tiny fraction of the population of persons with disabilities, and this population represents a level of impairment much more severe and disabling than most disabilities are. Moreover, the achievements of Helen Keller are well beyond the achievements of all but a tiny fraction of deaf/blind persons. She was indeed a super person. In a different way, so was Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

The two books in this section--Karen and Tom Sullivan's Adventures in Darkness--were selected particularly because they can be used by pupils with fifth and sixth grade reading levels.

The supplementary list at the end of this introduction includes good out-of-print biographies which may still be available in libraries, and newer hardcover books which may become available in paperback form and which may also be found in libraries. All of these books are appropriate for individual reading.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READINGS

All items included in this supplementary list have been identified as having merit in helping to increase understanding of people with disabilities. Some books which portray persons with disabilities realistically were not included either because they were poor literature, or because they presented an outdated view of treatment of the disabled.

Fiction

Category of Disability	Title and Description	Level	
		High School	Jr. High School
Deafness	Corcoran, B. *A Dance to Still Music.* New York: Atheneum, 1974. (paper) This is the story of a teenager who has become hearing impaired, and the fears and frustrations this engenders.		X
Deafness	Greenberg, J. "And Sarah Laughed." In J. Greenberg, *Rites of Passage*. New York: Avon, 1973. (paper) This is a beautiful short story about the difficulty in communication between deaf and hearing persons. The value of sign language to the deaf and their families is highlighted.	X	X
Deafness	Greenberg, J. *In This Sign*. New York: Avon, 1972. (paper) A deaf couple, educated in a residential school, struggle to make their way in the hearing world. This book beautifully portrays the fears and confusion of deaf persons educated in isolated settings when they attempt to interact with the hearing world.	X	9th
Blindness	Butler, B. *Gift of Gold.* New York: Pocket Books, 1973. (paper) A blind young woman strives to be accepted as a speech therapist. She is portrayed as intelligent, competent, and very much like other young adults.	X	X
Blindness	Evans, J. *Blind Sunday*. New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1978. (paper) This is a good book about a teenage boy and girl who like each other. The girl is blind, but she is also competent and fun to be with.		X

Category of Disability	Title and Description	Level	
		High School	Jr. High School
Mental Retardation	Hanlon, E. It's Too Late for Sorry. New York: Bradbury Press, 1978. This is the story of the complexity of feelings which people, in this case teenagers, have toward severely retarded persons. It illustrates love, ambivalence and cruelty of response.		X
Mental Retardation/ Brain Injury	Spenser, E. The Light in the Piazza. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971. (paper) The mother of a mildly retarded/brain injured woman gives her daughter the opportunity for a normal life, after struggling with her conscience about the morality of not alluding to her daughter's impairment. This short book is excellent for stimulating a discussion of values.	X	
Speech Impairment	Lee, M. The Skating Rink. New York: Seabury Press, 1969. A fifteen year old boy is heckled and mimicked because of the stammer which both reflects and exacerbates his self-doubts, in this sensitively written book.		X
Learning Disability	Albert, L. But I'm Ready to Go. New York: Dell, 1978. (paper) This book highlights the difficulties which a learning disabled adolescent experiences every day as she attempts to cope with school, the social world and the future.		X

Drama

Category of Disability	Title and Description	Level	
		High School	Jr. High School
Physical Impairment	Clark, B. Whose Life Is It Anyway? Chicago: Dramatic Publishing Co., 1974. (paper) A person who becomes a quadraplegic decides he no longer wants to live. Complex moral issues and questions about values are at the center of this drama.	11th/ 12th	
Physical Impairment	Schary, D. Sunrise at Campobello. New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1961. (paper) The story of Franklin D. Roosevelt's fight to live a full life in spite of the disabling effects of polio.	X	9th
Brain Injury/ Speech Impairment	Kopit, A. Wings. New York: Hill and Wang. Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1978. (paper) A woman's struggle to regain the ability to communicate after a stroke is portrayed in this play.	11th/ 12th	

Biographies and Other Nonfiction Books

Category of Disability	Title and Description	Level	
		High School	Jr. High School
Physical Impairment	Deacon, J. Joey. New York: Scribner, 1974. This is a first person account of a man with cerebral palsy who spent most of his life in an institution in England with no means of communication because no one could understand the sounds which were his best attempts at speech. While this book cannot be proposed as an example of good writing, it is nonetheless fascinating because of the basic idea of intelligence hidden in an uncontrollable body.	X	9th
Physical Impairment	Eareckson, J. Joni. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1976. (paper) Joni, a young woman who became a quadraplegic as a result of a diving accident, makes a life for herself by finding God, and through her talent in art. (She paints by holding a brush in her teeth.) Some readers may be bothered by the emphasis on religion in this book, but religion is one way of coming to terms with life as a severely, physically disabled person.	X	9th
Physical Impairment	Hathaway, L. B. The Little Locksmith. New York: Curtis, 1971. (paper) This is the poignantly beautiful but sad story of a woman whose richness of mind and soul could not help her gain admission into the world of "normal" people during her youth. She does eventually find love and make a life of her own, in spite of a severe spinal deformity and the prejudice toward physically disabled persons which existed 40 years ago. This book is out of print but available in some libraries.	11th/ 12th	
Physical Impairment	Jones, R. The Acorn People. New York: Bantam, 1977. (paper) This 80 page book is the story of a relationship which develops between a camp counselor and five severely physically impaired children. The children become individuals to the reader as they did to the author.	X	9th

Category of Disability	Title and Description	Level	
		High School	Jr. High School
Physical Impairment	Killilea, M. With Love From Karen.* New York: Dell, 1964. (paper) This is a sequel to the book Karen, the story of a young girl with cerebral palsy. While it is somewhat dated, it is full of understanding, love and compassion.		X
Physical Impairment	Kovic, R. Born on the Fourth of July. New York: Pocket Books, 1977. (paper) Ron Kovic became a paraplegic as a result of injuries sustained in Vietnam. This book is an anti-Vietnam cry as well as an account of a young man's growing consciousness. The sexually explicit content makes it inappropriate for school reading below 11th grade.	11th/ 12th	
Physical Impairment	Valens, E. G. The Other Side of the Mountain. New York: Warner, 1975. (paper) This book is the story of a champion skier who became a quadraplegic, but made a full life for herself nonetheless. While it is not a particularly good piece of writing, and while parts of the book may become tedious, Jill Kinmonth's drive and spirit draw the reader back.	X	9th
Physical Impairment	Valens, E. G. The Other Side of the Mountain - Part 2. New York: Warner, 1978. (paper) This is a continuation of the story of Jill Kinmont, with emphasis on her fulfillment in love and marriage. This book, too, may be found tedious at points and sometimes sounds like an advertisement for the movie story of her life. However, parts of it are quite interesting. The sexually explicit content may make it inappropriate for school reading below grade 11.	11th/ 12th	
Physical Impairment	Kirkendall, D., & Warren, M. P. Bottom High to the Crowd. New York: Walker, 1973. Don Kirkendall's wheelchair was more of an impediment to others than to him. The early part of this book, which deals with the treatment and effects of polio, is interesting only from a historical point of view, but Kirkendall's insistence on a full and normal life is as current as possible. While the writing in this book is not particularly impressive, the story is.	X	

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*Appropriate for pupils with 5th or 6th grade reading levels.

Category of Disability	Title and Description	Level	
		High School	Jr. High School
Deafness	Spradley, T. S., & Spradley, J. P. Deaf Like Me. New York: Random House, 1978. This is a beautiful story of parents striving to find the best way to help their deaf child learn to understand the world and find a way to communicate with the people in her life.	X	9th
Deafness	Wright, D. Deafness. New York: Stein and Day, 1975. (paper) This is the autobiography of an author who has been deaf since the age of seven. It is a beautifully written, poetic account of the experience of deafness. Because of its extensive vocabulary, it is most appropriate for college-bound 11th and 12th graders.	11th/ 12th	
Deafness	Tidyman, E. Dummy. New York: Bantam, 1974. This is the fascinating story of a deaf man accused of a crime who had no means of communication. Deprived of an education, he never learned either speech or sign language. The book raises a variety of issues on society's treatment of the disabled. This book was dramatized on television.	11th/ 12th	
Blindness	Krents. H. To Race the Wind. New York: Bantam, 1972. (paper) This excellent autobiography of a young blind man is out-of-print but still available in some bookstores as well as libraries. Harold Krents is the person who served as an inspiration for the play/film Butterflies Are Free.	X	9th
Blindness	Sullivan, T., & Gill, D. If You Could See What I Hear. New York: New American Library, 1976. (paper) Tom Sullivan is a bright, talented person who sometimes appears on television shows where he signs and plays his own musical compositions. His autobiography is not an especially good piece of literature but it is quite interesting.	X	
Blindness	Wolf, B. Connie's New Eyes.* Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1976. This is an interesting 96 page book of photographs and text about the training and functioning of a guide dog for the blind. It tells the story of a Golden Retriever named Blyth and the young woman to whom she belongs.		X

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*Appropriate for pupils with 5th or 6th grade reading levels.

Category of Disability	Title and Description	Level	
		High School	Jr. High School
Mental Retardation	Lynch, M. Mary Fran and Mo. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979. This is the story of two sisters, one of them brain injured and retarded. Maureen Lynch spent a year living with her older sister, trying to help her develop the skills needed for independent living. It is a story of love and sensitivity and struggle, which illuminates what having a handicapped sibling may mean.	X	9th
Mental Retardation	Meyers, R. Like Normal People. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978. This nonfiction book is the story of two retarded people, set into the larger context of changes in societal responses to the mentally retarded. It is filled with valuable information, as well as a beautiful account of the flowering of two people.	X	9th
Several Disabilities	Haskins, J. Who Are the Handicapped? Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978. This book, written for young adults, describes various types of disabilities and their effects upon people's lives. It also contains a section on attitudes about disabilities.	X	
Several Disabilities	Siegel, D. S. Winners: Eight Special Young People. New York: Julian Messner, 1978. This book tells the stories of eight young adults with various kinds of special problems, including deafness, blindness and physical disabilities.	X	9th

Literature for the High School

Steinbeck, J. _Of Mice and Men_. New York: Bantam, 1975 (paper)

Other editions:

- _Of Mice and Men_. New York: Covici-Friede, 1937.
- _Of Mice and Men._ New York: The Modern Library, Random House, 1937.
- _Of Mice and Men:_ A Play in Three Acts. New York: Covici-Friede, 1937.
- _The Short Novels of John Steinbeck_. New York: Viking, 1953.
- _The Portable Steinbeck_. New York: Viking, 1946.

For the Teacher

Lennie, who is the central character in Of Mice and Men, is mentally retarded. He cannot grasp or handle the demands of living in society. He is dependent upon George for care and guidance, as well as companionship. Even with George serving as his guardian, Lennie cannot survive. His mind is too undeveloped to control and direct his physical strength appropriately. He reacts like a child. In the face of fear he panics and responds instinctively to squelch the source. He doesn't want to get into trouble but doesn't know how to avoid or deal with it. Although he is pure in spirit, without intending to, he destroys, and in the end must be destroyed himself.

George assumed the role of guardian to Lennie after Lennie's aunt died. He, like Lennie's aunt, doesn't know how to keep this man with a child's mind, from harm and harming. He directs him not to speak rather than chance Lennie's saying the wrong thing. He attempts to limit Lennie's interaction with things he fears Lennie may mishandle. Lennie is a burden to him, yet he tries as best he knows how to protect him and give him companionship. In turn, in spite of his resentment, he wants to have Lennie with him. Lennie is the closest thing to family which George has. There is a closeness between them which George could probably not have established with anyone else, because Lennie trusts him completely and models himself after George, much the way a young boy might revere an older brother.

Lennie's retardation is exhibited in several ways. His memory is very poor. The aunt who raised him, for example, is some lady who used to give him mice. His sense of the past is blurred and vague.

His actions are not modified by anticipation of the outcomes of his behavior. He loves to stroke the soft fur of mice, yet each time a mouse nips his finger, he responds reflexively by pinching its head. No thought of the future mediates his response. Problem solving is very difficult for Lennie. When he does anticipate a negative outcome for his actions, as in the situations with the two women, he is unable to choose a corrective solution. His ensuing actions only exacerbate the problem.

For all the harm that Lennie wreaks, he is morally good. He has no bad intentions, as do some of the nonhandicapped characters. He has no hatreds or feelings of superiority toward Crooks, the sole black man on the farm, who also has a crooked spine. In fact, Lennie abhors and fears badness. "Le's go George," he says. "It's mean here."

Lennie could not survive in the time and setting of this book. It was the late 1920s or early thirties. He had been raised by an aunt, probably largely in isolation from others. He didn't go to school. He had no friends, only the small, soft mice he loved to pet. Who taught Lennie how to act, how to control his huge body with its instincts? Who worked to teach him to understand the complexities of life? His Aunt Clara probably tried. It was not enough. George tried. It was not enough.

Would the outcome for Lennie be different today? It might be. Much has changed. A child like Lennie today would attend school. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 mandates education for all children. He would probably be a member of a class in the public school in the community where he lived. An Individualized

Education Program would have to be written for Lennie by school personnel with the concurrence of his guardian, Aunt Clara. His teachers might well work on helping him with problem solving--making choices, weighing possible outcomes. He would have other children for companionship, and might not be so badly in need of animals to pet. When Lennie became an adolescent his school program would probably include a sex education program designed specifically for the retarded. It would include a component on appropriate ways of reaching out to members of the opposite sex. When Lennie's Aunt Clara died, he need not have become the ward of George. There are now group homes and half-way houses where he might have lived. There he might even have met a mentally retarded woman who would want to be close to him, so that his petting would not have resulted in a dangerous situation.

The outcome for Lennie might have been very different today. However, there is still meanness of spirit stalking the disabled. There are Curleys who taunt and hurt the retarded. There are others who fear them. In Of Mice and Men Lennie is portrayed as a menace, a portrayal of the handicapped which is common throughout literature. Still today some people think of the mentally retarded as menaces. They fight the advent of small group homes into their neighborhoods, citing the dangers of contact between their children and the mentally retarded. In fact, their children may be safer among the mentally retarded than among the general population. There are few Lennies among the mentally retarded. Persons with mental retardation are much more often the victims rather than the perpetrators of harm.

Additional Information on Mental Retardation for the Teacher

1. Read the unit on Flowers for Algernon in this guide.
2. Meyer, R. Like Normal People. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978.

   This nonfiction book tells the story of two young mentally retarded persons who develop their capacities to the fullest. Their story is set into the context of societal response to the mentally retarded during the 1950s, 60s and 70s.
3. MR 76: Mental Retardation: Past and Present. Washington, DC: President's Committee on Mental Retardation, 1977.

   (Free single copies may still be available from The President's Committee on Mental Retardation, Washington, DC 20201. If not, it can be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402, Stock No. 040-000-00385-1.)

Lesson I

Theme: The mentally retarded share the universal longing for closeness, companionship and belonging.

Objectives:

.Students will recognize that the mentally retarded have the same need for closeness that all other people have.

.Students will recognize that a person with mental retardation can give closeness, companionship and belonging to others.

Introducing the Lesson

Ask two students to read the following excerpt from Chapter I of the book aloud, with one student reading Lennie's dialogue and the other reading George's.

> GEORGE
>
> "Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no family. They don't belong no place. They come to a ranch an work up a stake, and the first thing you know they're pounding their tail on some other ranch. They ain't got nothing to look ahead to."
>
> LENNIE
>
> "That's it--that's it. Now tell how it is with us."
>
> GEORGE
>
> "With us it ain't like that. We got a future. We got somebody to talk to that gives a damn about us. We don't have to sit in no bar room blowing our jack jus' because we got no place else to go. If them other guys gets in jail they can rot for all anybody gives a damn. But not us."

LENNIE
"But not us! An' why? Because...Because I got you to
look after me, and you got me to look after you, and
that's why." (Laughs delightedly.) (p. 15)

Discussion Guide

Teacher Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1. What feelings did George and Lennie have toward each other, as reflected in this dialogue?	Make a list on the chalkboard of the students' responses. Responses may include: warmth, dependence, closeness, a feeling of companionship, protectiveness, belongingness.
2. Look at the words on the board with which you characterized the relationship between Lennie and George. If these words had been used to describe a relationship between two people you didn't know, what kind of a relationship would you have thought was being described?	The feelings communicated during the exchange between Lennie and George might be identified as those between husband and wife; parent and child; good friends; young child and older sibling.
3. Why would George have taken on responsibility for Lennie?	Students may respond with: loneliness, lack of family ties, a sense of importance because Lennie needs him so much. The quote

below, from p. 45, may be read aloud by one of the students to elicit or reinforce the above ideas.

> "I ain't got no people," George said. "I seen the guys that go around on the ranches alone. That ain't no good. They don't have no fun. After a long time they get mean. They get wantin' to fight all the time."
>
> "Yeah, they get mean," Slim agreed. "They get so they don't want to talk to nobody."

4. Did the relationship mean more, less or about the same thing to Lennie as to George? Why?

Students may respond that the relationship was important to both men but had additional importance to Lennie because he could probably not survive on his own. The quote below, from page 80, may be read aloud by one of the students to highlight this special need.

> "George gonna come back," Lennie reassured himself in a frightened voice. "Maybe George come back already. Maybe I better go see"....
>
> Lennie said miserably, "George wun't go away and leave me. I know George wun't do that."

5. What usual aspects of friendship were missing in this relationship?

Lennie and George were not equal intellectually, and Lennie's retardation limited his ability to participate in joint planning and decision making.

6. In what ways is Lennie a good friend to George?	Lennie has absolute trust and faith in George. He senses George's moods and adjusts his own actions to suit them. Lennie shares George's dream for the future.
7. What negative aspects does this relationship have for George?	Lennie is a burden. He causes trouble and constant anxiety for George. He limits George's behavioral choices. After the students have responded to the question, ask one of the students to read aloud George's monologue on this subject (pp. 11-12).

GEORGE

> "God a'might, if I was alone I could live so easy. I could go get a job an' work, an' no trouble. No mess at all, and when the end of the month come I could take my fifty bucks and go into town and bet whatever I want. Why, I could stay in a cathouse all night. I could eat any place I want, hotel or any place, and order any damn thing I could think of. An' I could do all that every damn month. Get a gallon of whiskey, or set in a pool room and play cards or shoot pool....An' whatta I got...I got you! You can't keep a job and you lose me ever' job I get. Jus' keep me shovin' all over the country all the time. An' that ain't the worst. You get in trouble. You do bad things and I got to get you out....You crazy son-of-a bitch. You keep me in hot water all the time."

8. What limitations does this relationship have for Lennie?	He isn't capable of coping adequately with some situations in which he finds himself. George tries to limit Lennie's interactions, but doesn't help Lennie learn to deal with those interactions that Lennie can't avoid.

	In this vein, George cuts Lennie off from some of the physical closeness Lennie apparently needs.
9. How many of you would have thought that a relationship as close as that of George and Lennie could exist between a mentally retarded person and a person who was not mentally retarded? Why? Why not?	YES Persons with retarded mental development want closeness and love, just as everyone else does. Their more limited mental development does not prevent them from caring, loyalty or affection. NO Students may respond with a variety of types of answers, reflecting stereotypes or conceptualizations of the retarded as less than fully human. The teacher may end the discussion with a statement such as that which follows.

Of Mice and Men reflects the belief that a mentally retarded person can contribute warmth, caring, belongingness and companionship to a relationship with a non-retarded adult. More and more families of retarded children and adults feel this way today. Most mentally retarded individuals today are living with their families or spend time doing things together with their families, rather than being sent away at young ages, far from families, relatives and neighbors.

Supplementary Activity

Composition: Think of a person you know who is mentally retarded. With whom does this person interact? How would you characterize these interactions? Does he/she have any relationship marked by the kind of closeness that existed between Lennie and George? If so, describe this relationship. If not, explain why you think this person does not have a close relationship with someone else.

Lesson II

Theme: Myths and stereotypes about mentally retarded people keep us from getting to know them as they really are.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to identify beliefs about mentally retarded persons as they are reflected in literature.
- Students will be able to describe common beliefs about mentally retarded persons which are largely untrue.

Introducing the Lesson

Ask the class: "How many of you know or have seen anyone who is mentally retarded?" Most of the students should respond affirmatively. Then the teacher continues: "I am going to ask you to show us what you believe about mentally retarded persons through role playing. For about 3 or 4 minutes I want a student to act as if he/she were a mentally retarded person of 18 or 19."

Student #1: "Leave the room and re-enter as a mentally retarded person. Introduce yourself to the class."

Student #2: "Tell us how you spend your time on a typical day."

Student #3: "Tell us about the things you can do and the things you find hard to do."

The aim of the above activity is to identify stereotypes about the mentally retarded which the students hold. After the three students have completed their role playing, ask the other students to identify the ways in which each student was different from his usual self. Then ask each of the three students to describe what she/he was trying to do differently. With contributions from the students, make a list on the board of beliefs about the mentally retarded embedded in the student presentations. This list may include such beliefs as:

.Mentally retarded persons move differently. They are clumsy and poorly coordinated.

.Mentally retarded persons speak unclearly.

.Mentally retarded persons look stupid. They have dumb facial expressions.

.Mentally retarded persons have to be taken care of all of the time.

.Mentally retarded persons are better off in institutions.

Summarize the discussion by saying: "Most of us have beliefs or stereotypes of what mentally retarded persons are like. Some of these stereotypes may reflect bits of correct information, but often stereotypes are based on outdated assumptions and misinterpretations. Stereotypes are always false as applied to individuals because they are group composites.

We have just identified some of our own stereotypes about mentally retarded persons. Now let's look at the image of the mentally retarded person presented by Steinbeck in the character of Lennie."

Discussion Guide

Teacher Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1. In our last lesson we saw that Steinbeck believed a mentally retarded person could have close and caring relationships, but that these relationships were limited in some ways because of the mentally retarded person's limited thinking. In what ways was Lennie's ability to think limited? Give examples.	Limitations are obvious in relation to memory, judgment and anticipation of consequences. If the students can't give examples, you can ask them to read those given below. Poor memory -- p. 4 "Where we going, George?" The little man jerked down the brim of his hat and scowled over at Lennie. "So you forgot that awready, did you? I gotta tell you again do I? Jesus Christ, you're a crazy bastard!" "I forgot," Lennie said softly. "I tried not to forget. Honest to God I did, George."

Poor judgment -- p. 46

So he reaches out to feel this red dress an' the girl lets out a squawk, and that gets Lennie all mixed up, and he holds on cause that's the only thing he can think to do.

Inability to anticipate the consequences of his actions -- p. 100

"I don't want you to yell. You gonna get me in trouble just like George says you will. Now don't do that." And she continued to struggle, and her eyes were wild with terror. He shook her then, and he was angry with her. "Don't you go yellin'," he said, and he shook her, and her body flopped like a fish. And then she was still, for Lennie had broken her neck.

He looked down at her, and carefully removed his hand from over her mouth, and she lay still. I don't want to hurt you," he said, "I don't want to but George'll be mad if you yell." When she didn't answer nor move he bent closely over her. He lifted her arm and let it drop. For a moment he seemed bewildered. And then he whispered in fright, "I done a bad thing. I done another bad thing."

2. Is Lennie a moral person? Is he good? Is he bad?	If we limit our consideration of Lennie's morality to his intentions, he is a very good person. He doesn't want to hurt anyone. He dislikes meanness and trouble. He doesn't exhibit the prejudice that most of the other men feel toward Crooks because he is black. But if we consider the outcome of Lennie's actions as well as his intentions, we must conclude that he is a menace.
3. How does Lennie feel about women? Are his feelings "abnormal?"	He likes them. Example, p. 35. Lennie still stared at the doorway where she had been. "Gosh, she was purty." He smiled admiringly. His feelings certainly aren't abnormal for a grown man. If anything, they are undefined and minimally developed. He is always left behind while the other men visit a "cat house."
4. Who is to blame for the death of Curley's wife? Is Lennie? Is Curley's wife? Is George? Is society?	Lennie killed Curley's wife, although he had no intention of hurting her. Curley's wife forced the contact between herself and Lennie that led to her death, but she had no way of anticipating that this would be the outcome. George knew that Lennie could not use good judgment when he was frightened, but he didn't

	know what to do about this other than to try to warn him away from potentially dangerous situations. Society in the 1920s and 30s made no provision for retarded persons like Lennie. There was no educational program for Lennie when he was a child. There were no social outlets. Thinking and social controls are taught in school as well as in the home, but for Lennie, who needed much more skilled teaching than most children, there was only his Aunt Clara.
5. How should Lennie be treated for what he has done? In the story he was killed. What would happen to him today if he had killed Curley's wife?	Lennie is a menace because of his great strength and becasse he had never been helped to develop good judgment. He cannot be allowed to continue to move about freely in society because situations will arise where he will again cause destruction. Unfortunately most retarded persons like Lennie who commit crimes are placed in prisons where there is no attempt to habilitate them. In prison they usually become the victims, the scapegoats, of the other inmates. Sometimes they are sent to institutions for the mentally retarded, where they in turn often victimize the other retarded residents.

6. Did this story have to end in tragedy, with Curley's wife dead, Lennie being killed? How might this story have ended in a society which treated the mentally retarded according to their needs?

In the context of the 1920s and 30s this was the inevitable ending for the story, given the character of Lennie as he was. Today, this need not be the case.

Today, under federal law, mentally retarded children have to be provided with an educational program. They do not grow up in isolation of other children. Most attend community schools. Their educational programs should include social skills. When they reach adolescence, career education and sex education should be added. Increasingly, mentally retarded adults live in group homes, where Lennie might have lived after his Aunt Clara died if his story had been set into the 1970s. In a group home he would have had opportunities to socialize with other retarded men and women under supervision. His almost obsessive need to pet soft things might have instead found expression in a male/female love relationship. Without the tremendous fear of angering George on whom he was completely dependent, and with the experience of 15 or so years of education and social interaction, Lennie would probably not have been a menace.

7. Can mentally retarded persons like Lennie learn? Can they be taught to use better judgment, to anticipate consequences, to act appropriately in social situations, to control their impulses?	Yes, they can learn. Many mildly retarded persons melt into the general population in adulthood. They marry, become parents, work, socialize and act in ways indistinguishable from the rest of the population. There is recent evidence to show that even moderately and severely retarded persons can be taught appropriate social behavior and control, if the right methods are used. The earlier educational programs are instituted, the greater the progress usually noted. This is why there are many preschool and even infant education programs for mentally retarded children today.

Fact or Myth?

This activity may take place at the end of Lesson II if time permits, or it may take up part of a third class session.

Distribute the brief questionnaire entitled "Fact or Myth?" and tell the students to complete it quickly. After about three minutes say "stop." Then read each question, one at a time, and poll the class on its response. Ask students to present the rationale behind their responses. If the class cannot agree on a response, or chooses the one not indicated on the answer sheet, read the answer provided.

An unmarked copy of this questionnaire for duplication is included in the Appendix.

Fact or Myth?

Answer the questions below by putting an "X" in either the column labeled "Fact" or the one labeled "Myth." Then put a "✓" in the third column each time a statement reflects a belief in the book Of Mice and Men.

	FACT	MYTH	Reflected in Of Mice and Men
1. Mentally retarded persons are larger and stronger than others.			
2. Mentally retarded persons are morally pure. Any harm they do is unintentional.			
3. Mentally retarded persons are unsuited for living in society and are better off in institutions.			
4. Mentally retarded persons have normal sex drives.			
5. Mentally retarded persons are largely uneducable.			
6. Mentally retarded persons are menaces.			
7. Mentally retarded persons can participate in close and caring relationships.			
8. Mental retardation is contagious.			
9. The crime rate in the mentally retarded population is high.			
10. Mildly retarded persons often work , marry and become generally indistinguishable from the rest of the population in adulthood.			

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Answer the questions below by putting an "X" in either the column labeled "Fact" or the one labeled "Myth." Then put a "✓" in the third column each time a statement reflects a belief in the book Of Mice and Men.

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2. Mentally retarded persons are morally pure. Any harm they do is unintentional.		X	✓
3. Mentally retarded persons are unsuited for living in society and are better off in institutions.		X	✓
4. Mentally retarded persons have normal sex drives.	X		✓
5. Mentally retarded persons are largely uneducable.		X	✓
6. Mentally retarded persons are menaces.		X	✓
7. Mentally retarded persons can participate in close and caring relationships.	X		✓
8. Mental retardation is contagious.		X	
9. The crime rate in the mentally retarded population is high.	X		✓
10. Mildly retarded persons often work , marry and become generally indistinguishable from the rest of the population in adulthood.	X		

Explanations of Responses to "Fact or Myth?"

1. False. If anything, there is a slight difference in the opposite direction, as many moderately to profoundly retarded persons have poor motor and physical development as well as health problems.

2. False. Some mentally retarded persons may be cruel, selfish, mean etc., just as some non-retarded people are. There are, however, more instances of non-intentional anti-social behavior among the mentally retarded because of their more limited understanding.

3. False. On the whole, retarded persons in institutions do not develop as well as equally impaired persons living at home or in the community. Many mildly retarded persons are able to live independently in society. Others are able to function well in group homes or apartments, with some supervision.

4. True. If anything, some severely or profoundly retarded individuals appear to have low sex drives. Problems may arise if the mentally retarded person does not know how to appropriately express his/her sexual needs, or is cut off from all avenues of expression.

5. False. Most mentally retarded persons are educable if appropriate methods are used. Even severely and profoundly retarded individuals can be taught some skills with appropriate training methods.

6. False. Most mentally retarded persons hurt no one. A small minority of mentally retarded persons commit acts of violence against others. Sometimes mentally retarded persons reach out to others in ways that are unexpected and which may therefore frighten the other person, even though no harm is involved.

7. True. There is an abundance of evidence to this effect in clinical situations.

8. False. This is a damaging myth which often keeps handicapped and non-handicapped persons apart. Mental retardation may be caused by genetic factors; problems during pregnancy or the birth process; conditions to which the mother has been exposed during pregnancy such as drugs, alcohol, rubella, x-rays; or environmental conditions during childhood. None of these conditions can be "caught."

9. True. While mentally retarded persons make up only about three percent of the general population, they make up almost ten percent of the prison population. There is evidence that some of the factors accounting for this phenomenon are: a misunderstanding of how to attain goals in a legal fashion; a great desire to be accepted by others who may be involved in law breaking; and a high rate of confessions. Some mentally retarded persons have limited ability to appreciate the consequences of their behavior (like Lennie), and others strike out in frustration stemming from their own limitations or feelings of rejection.

10. True. In adulthood a large proportion of the mildly retarded population melts into the general population.

Supplementary Activities

Read: Meyer, R. Like Normal People New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978.* This non-fiction book tells the story of two mentally retarded persons who develop their capacities to the fullest. Their story is set into the context of societal responses to the mentally retarded during the 1950s, 60s and 70s. After reading this book, write a brief description of the resources available to mentally retarded persons in the 1970s as compared to the pre-World War II period.

Write:

(1) Write a character description of a mentally retarded person as if you were introducing him/her in a novel or short story. Model your description on a mentally retarded person you know or have observed.

(2) Give a dictionary definition of stereotype. Then give examples of 10 stereotypes not related to mental retardation. Examples may pertain to other types of disabled persons.

(3) *Rewrite the story of Lennie using Steinbeck's depiction of Lennie as a starting point, but updating the setting by about 60 years. It is now 1990. Lennie was born in 1970. Describe Lennie's life, showing how it is different from the life Steinbeck painted.

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*Particularly appropriate for honors classes or extra credit.

Keyes, D. Flowers for Algernon. New York: Bantam Books, 1966.
(paper)

Other edition:

Flowers for Algernon. New York: Harcourt Brace
Jovanovich, 1966.

For the Teacher

Flowers for Algernon, using the deus ex machina of an experimental procedure which turns a mentally retarded person into a genius, presents a rich picture of how the retarded are viewed by themselves and others. We see Charlie in the context of his family, work situation, social activities, school and institution. We learn how Charlie, as a mentally retarded individual, perceived the interactions in these settings. Then we are shown another view of these interactions, this time from the perspective of a person with superior intelligence. The device used by Keyes for illuminating differences in the lives of mentally retarded persons and non-retarded persons is marvelously effective.

We learn of the shame of parents of retarded children; of their inability to accept the reality of their child's retardation; of their search for a miraculous cure that will make their child normal. We learn of the resentment, and shame of siblings. We learn of the ways in which mentally retarded persons are mocked and made objects of ridicule; of how others take advantage of them, and treat them cruelly. We learn that the retarded are treated as less than human, as if they were inanimate objects.

We see how the retarded are frightened away from sex and deprived of love.

We see how the retarded are shut away from the rest of society and cut off from much of the range of human experience.

Keyes also does an excellent job of portraying the strivings of a retarded person to be more like others, to learn to do what others can do, and to be accepted by others. Charlie attends a special program to try to learn to read and write better. He is highly motivated to improve. He works hard.

On the other hand, Charlie's consistent satisfaction, good mood and good will, while characteristic of some retarded individuals, is by no means the norm. Most retarded persons do have bad moods, feel frustrated, express anger, and sometimes do mean or selfish things.

Additional Information on Mental Retardation for the Teacher

1. See the unit on Of Mice and Men.
2. MR 76: Mental Retardation: Past and Present. Washington, DC: President's Committee on Mental Retardation, 1977. (Free single copies may still be available from The President's Committee on Mental Retardation, Washington, DC 20201. If not, it can be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402; Stock No. 040-000-00385-1.)

Lesson I

Theme: Mentally retarded persons want to be like other people and want to be accepted by others.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to recognize the strivings of mentally retarded persons toward acceptance.
- Students will be able to describe the major dimensions of mild mental retardation.

Introducing the Lesson

Teacher: "Flowers for Algernon is a book about someone named Charlie. Tell us about Charlie. What kind of a person is he? What is he like?"

List the characteristics described by the students on the board. They are likely to include such attributes as: "He is mentally retarded." "He tries hard to please others." "He has a poor memory." "He's a cheerful person." After the student responses have been noted, ask the class what characteristic it would select to describe Charlie if only one could be given. The likely answer is "mentally retarded."* Respond by saying: "Many of us think about disabled people primarily in terms of their disability. This exaggerates their difference, and sets them apart from us. On the other hand, most mentally retarded persons want to be as much like everyone else as possible. Let's look at Charlie to see how he is different and how he tries to gain acceptance.

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*If this is not the one characteristic selected, ask for a second one, which is almost certain to be "mentally retarded." If the class still does not select this descriptor, state that most groups would have selected "mentally retarded." Then continue as outlined.

Discussion Guide

Teacher Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1. What is mental retardation? What does mental retardation mean?	Students may respond with such answers as "a low IQ," "inability to learn." You may present the American Association on Mental Deficiency definition of mental retardation, which includes three components: (1) Significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning (This means below 70 IQ); existing concurrently with (2) deficits in adaptive behavior (This refers to everyday living skills such as self-care, communication and social interaction); (3) manifested during the developmental period (prior to 18 years of age). Another way of looking at it is that mentally retarded people need more time and more skilled teaching to learn and there are some abstract concepts or complex skills which most people can learn that the mentally retarded person will not be able to master.

2. How retarded was Charlie? Was he mildly retarded, moderately retarded, severely retarded or profoundly retarded?	Many students will probably say "moderately retarded," but according to the American Association on Mental Deficiency definition, Charlie, with his IQ of 68, would be near the top of the mildly retarded population. Mild retardation usually refers to persons with IQs between 55 and 69. Moderate retardation means an IQ between 40 and 54. Severe retardation means an IQ of 25-39. Profound refers to an IQ below 25. Keyes may have made some of Charlie's characteristics more likely for a person whose IQ was in the upper 50s or low 60s than for someone whose IQ was 68 (for example, Charlie's extremely poor memory of the past), but even with this kind of an IQ Charlie would still be considered mildly retarded.
3. What aspects of adult living was Charlie capable of mastering?	He worked. He lived independently and took care of his daily functioning. He attended classes for retarded adults at a university. He traveled to and from these places independently.

4. What aspects of adult functioning was Charlie not able to experience or master? Which of these aspects could he have mastered given sufficient time and appropriate teaching?

Written communication-- When the fear and anger were taken out of the situation he learned to read and write, although his comprehension was still poor and there were errors in his writing.

Work--He could only perform simple tasks, but had he been given sufficient time and skilled teaching he might have mastered some vocational skills.

Read Charlie's reaction after failing to remember how to shape the rolls in the bakery (p. 46).

> If they gave him enough time--if they didn't rush him or push him too fast--he would get it. But nobody has time.

Sexual relationships--His mother so frightened him about anything having to do with the body or the opposite sex, that the only thing which remains is peeping from a distance. Sex education, geared to the level of understanding of the retarded, (and more appropriate behavior on his mother's part), might have enabled him to establish means of expression appropriate for an adult.

5. How aware was Charlie of his differentness?

He was very much aware of not being as intelligent as others, not being able to read or write, not being able to do work tasks that others could do, not understanding some of what other people said to him or discussed among themselves.

Ask the students to give examples of Charlie's awareness. You may also have students read the passage below.

p. 139--

> Even in my dullness I knew I was inferior. Other people had something I lacked--something denied me.

6. Why did Charlie agree to the operation?

Because he very much wanted to be like other people, and to be accepted by other people.

p. 3--

> Prof. Nemur said but why did you want to lern to reed and spell in the frist place. I tolld him because all my life I wanted to be smart and not dumb...

p. 10--

> I just want to be smart like other people so I can have lots of friends who like me.

p. 11--

> I got to try to be smart like other pepul. Then when I am smart they will talk to me and I can sit with them and listen like Joe Carp and Frank & Gimpy do when they talk and have a discushen about importent things.

7. What else did Charlie do to gain acceptance?	He did whatever his "friends" from the bakery asked him to, even when this was not what he wanted to do, for example, drinking whiskey, and tolerating their physical cruelties because he thought that made him their friend. He also went to school three nights a week because he thought that if he could learn to read and write he would be accepted by others.
8. What was the effect of all of Charlie's strivings on the responses of others? What good did all his efforts do in terms of gaining acceptance?	He was treated with consideration by some people who respected his efforts, people like Alice Kinnian, Fanny Birden, Mr. Donner and Gimpy. He was still mocked and made the butt of jokes by others. Sometimes he was not thought of as a person. p. 63-- "But I'm not an inanimate object," I argued. "I'm a person." He looked confused for a moment and then laughed. "Of course, Charlie. But I wasn't referring to now. I meant before the operation."... "I was a person before the operation. In case you forgot--" "Yes, of course, Charlie. Don't misunderstand. But it was different..." p. 101-- He makes the same mistake as the others when they look at a feeble-minded person and laugh because they don't understand there are human feelings involved.

Conclude the lesson by stating: "'There are human feelings involved,' says Charlie Gordon. We're going to take a look at Charlie's feelings and those of the people who interact with him, in the next two lessons."

Supplementary Activity

Write

Write a brief description of the differences in Charlie's written language when he was retarded and as he was approaching average intelligence. You may want to:

(1) Analyze the mistakes Charlie made in progress reports 1-6.

(2) List the new skills he exhibits in writing progress report 9.

Lesson II

Theme: Having and raising a retarded child is a stressful experience for many families.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to describe the stress which having a retarded child presents for many parents.
- Students will be able to describe ways in which the stress of having a retarded child could be eased.

Introducing the Lesson

Read the following passage to the class:

> "Don't tell me there's nothing they can do.... He's going to be normal, whatever we have to do, whatever it costs."
> "It's not something money can buy...."
> "I won't listen to that talk. They don't know, so they say nothing can be done. Dr. Guarino explained it all to me. They won't sponsor his invention, he says, because it will prove they're wrong" (p. 95).

Then state: "That was Charlie's mother talking, looking and hoping for a miraculous cure. The story of Flowers for Algernon revolves around the ideas of such a cure, albeit a temporary one. This story is Keyes' version of what might happen if the search for a miraculous cure were successful."

"Medical science has achieved fantastic breakthroughs in the past few years. Have they found any 'cure' for mental retardation, any way of turning retarded individuals into persons of average intelligence?"

After the students have responded, you might make the following points, if they had not already been given:

.There have been many advances in the prevention of mental retardation, e.g., a special diet for babies born with phenylketonuria, a metabolic disorder which had almost inevitably led to severe mental retardation.

.There have been many advances in the educational treatment of retarded children, so that, for example, many children with Down's Syndrome are no longer falling into the severely retarded category, but are increasingly functioning as mildly or moderately retarded individuals.

.There have been great advances made in diagnosis so that children who might formerly have been considered retarded are now recognized as having serious communication difficulties due to cerebral palsy or severe hearing impairment.

Conclude the introduction by saying: "Unfortunately, there has not been a miraculous breakthrough or cure which could transform mentally retarded individuals to persons of normal or better intelligence. The miraculous cure sought by Charlie's mother, and so many real parents of the retarded, the desire for a cure which propells them to quacks like Dr. Guarino, is still only a fantasy. Let's look at what life is like for the family of a retarded child."

Discussion Guide

Teacher Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1. What were Charlie's mother's feelings when she became aware that he was not like most other children? Describe what she did in response to these feelings.	Guilt, shame, anger and denial, followed by a search for a cure. The anger and denial are evident in the passage below. "He's normal! He's normal! He'll grow up like other people. Better than others." She was trying to scratch the teacher, but Dad was holding her back. "He'll go to college someday. He'll be sombody" (p. 50). Shame: "Charlie! What did you do?" "Just an accident, Mrs. Gordon. He was frightened the first time"... But Rose Gordon is sick with embarrassment. "It's disgusting. I don't know what to do, Dr. Guarino. Even at home he forgets--and sometimes when we have people in the house. I'm so ashamed when he does that" (p. 99). Denial is illustrated in the passage in the introduction to the lesson. Her search for a cure takes her to frauds like Dr. Guarino.
2. How do Charlie's mother's feelings for him change after his sister is born? Why?	She rejects him. When she was sure her prayers had been answered, and Norma showed all signs of normal intelligence, ...my mothers voice began to sound different. Not only her voice, but her touch, her look, her very presence--all changed. It was as if her magnetic poles had

	reversed and where they had once attracted now repelled. I see now that when Norma flowered in our garden I became a weed, allowed to exist only where I would not be seen, in corners and dark places(p. 117). Why? She is afraid that he might hurt his sister in some way, either physically--when she was a baby--or psychologically.
3. What aspects of Charlie's behavior caused his mother stress?	His inability to master school work, the difficulty of toilet training him completely, the oddness or bizarreness of some of his behavior, his sexual curiosity.
4. What evidence is there that Charlie's parents were experiencing stress as a result of having a mentally retarded child?	Constant arguments over how to treat Charlie.
5. What stress did Charlie's presence in the family cause his sister?	She was teased and rejected by other children. She was jealous of the attention he received.
6. Why did Charlie's mother want to send him to the Warren State Home and Training School?	To allow her daughter "a chance for a normal life," and because she was afraid Charlie's sexual urges would be expressed. She is particularly afraid that he might express his sexual urges toward his sister.

7. Are there any alternatives today for a family like Charlie's besides placing the retarded child in an institution or having the family torn apart and the mother psychologically destroyed? What resources are there today to help a family like this?	Today there are special education programs in community public schools for children like Charlie. Sex education is increasingly a part of the special education. Parent counseling and support is available either through the school program or through agencies for the retarded, such as the Association for Retarded Citizens. If the family strain is so severe that the child must be removed from the home, a foster care placement or temporary respite care placement may be arranged. Group homes are also increasingly available in the community.
8. The Director of the Warren State Home and Training School says about mildy retarded individuals: "After a week or so on the outside most of them come back when they find there's nothing for them out there. The world doesn't want them and they soon know it." Was he right?	In some ways he was. The retarded are often shunned or mocked. There is, for example, opposition almost every time an attempt is made to open a new group home for the retarded. On the other hand, there is a trend toward more acceptance today than in the past, and there are many more resources for the retarded in the community.

Conclude by stating: "In the next lesson we will look at some of the ways in which the retarded are hurt."

Supplementary Activities

Write:

1. Suppose you live next door to a family that has a retarded child under age 8. Describe how your behavior might (a) make this family's life more stressful, or (b) make this family's life easier or more pleasant.

2. A stigma is an undesirable differentness, an attribute which discredits a person, a kind of disgrace. Charlie's mother felt that his mental retardation was a stigma. List four other attributes that are often perceived as stigmas in our society. Briefly describe how these perceptions may affect the behavior of others toward the stigmatized persons, and how the stigmatized persons may, in turn, be affected by this behavior.

Lesson III

Theme: There are many ways in which retarded persons are treated cruelly.

Objectives:

- .Students will be able to identify ways in which the retarded are hurt or mistreated.
- .Students will be able to identify the false assumptions underlying some of the cruelties practiced against retarded persons.

Introducing the Lesson

Teacher: "Think of all the words you have ever used or heard used to refer to mentally retarded persons." As the students recite these terms, list them on the board. They may include: "retard," "moron," "idiot," "imbecile," "dumbbell," "dodo." Ask the students what all of these terms have in common. Some of the students may refer to a "put down," or some other way of expressing degradation. Summarize by saying: "All of these words have built into them connotations of devaluation, whether they are used to refer to mentally retarded persons or to others."

Ask the class: "In what ways did the characters in Flowers for Algernon devalue Charlie because he was retarded?" Students may respond with: "They teased him." "They laughed at him." "They played tricks on him." "Dr. Nemur acted as if he were an inanimate object rather than a person."

Read the passage below to the class:

> I think it's a good thing about finding out how everybody laughs at me. I thought about it a lot. It's because I'm so dumb and I don't even know when I'm doing something dumb. People think it's funny when a dumb person can't do things the same way they can (p. 31).

Conclude by saying: "We are going to examine more closely some of the ways in which we degrade and devalue the retarded and how such behavior affects them."

Discussion Guide

Teacher Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1. Ask a student to read the passage which follows: "Jesus, Frank, why do you gotta pick on him?" "It don't mean nothing," laughs Frank. "It don't hurt him. He don't know any better. Do you, Charlie?" (p.42) Was Frank right in believing that the tricks he played on Charlie didn't hurt Charlie?	No. Some of the tricks resulted in physical injury, as when Frank kicked Charlie's legs from under him and Charlie cracked his head against the wall. Charlie felt physical pain. Also, these incidents engendered a general fear in Charlie of further injury. Some of the tricks resulted in Charlie being left in a position where he couldn't take care of himself, as when they abandoned him, drunk, in a neighborhood he did not know how to get home from. That time he was hurt too, and he felt it.

2. What did Frank mean when he said that this behavior didn't mean anything?	What Frank was reflecting is a belief that retarded individuals are less than human, that they have no feelings or sensibilities. This is a false concept but one which has been prevalent throughout the ages. Charlie had feelings and he could sense things. The belief behind Frank's statement has been used as a rationale for all kinds of cruel behavior toward the retarded.
3. What did Frank mean when he said that Charlie didn't know any better?	He probably was referring to the fact that Charlie was frequently treated this way and therefore had come to expect this kind of treatment. Charlie didn't know that he had a right not to be abused, and he didn't know how to express objection to such abuse.
4. What kind of "tricks" were played on Charlie when he was a child?	When he tried to send a valentine to a girl he liked and asked a boy to write it for him, the boy wrote a "dirty" message instead. Charlie gets a beating as a result, one he certainly didn't deserve. The other children just laughed (pp. 37-39). Older boys threw things at him and abused him in other ways (p. 32).

5. How aware was Charlie of the less physical kinds of tricks and games in which he was the object of ridicule, the fall guy?	He was unaware of some of the tricks people played on him, i.e., he didn't understand that his "friends" had played a joke on him when they sent him "around the corner to see if it was raining." He was also unaware of the negative connotations of some verbal communications. On the other hand, he was aware in a general way of being laughed at. When being laughed at went hand-in-hand with being included and not being physically abused, he accepted it. Make the point that most persons with IQs in the high 60s have a lot more awareness of verbal mockery than Charlie was depicted as having.
6. Why did Keys include an incident where Charlie, no longer retarded, meets up with a retarded busboy? What did he hope to communicate through this incident?	How easy it is to fall into the common pattern of belittling the retarded. Charlie did it himself, under the influence of the group's mockery.
7. Why do people belittle, tease, mock and play tricks on retarded persons?	They are different. They can't do things we have come to expect everyone to be able to do, or they do them in different and less effective ways. We assume that they don't have feelings or sensibilities. We consider them as less than human. Some people use the retarded to make up for their own feelings of inadequacy or dissatisfaction. Retarded persons are usually easy targets.

8. If you had to pick the major message of this book, how would you describe it? What is it that Charlie, about to lose his intelligence again, is pleading for?	There are many related messages that might be referred to, but perhaps the best example of the author's message is in the passage where he shouts out at the customers teasing the retarded busboy: "Leave him alone! He can't understand! He can't help what he is... but for God's sake, have some respect! He's a human being" (p. 138). If the students don't come up with the idea of the major message being that retarded persons are human beings and are therefore deserving of respect, have one of the students read the above passage, and ask them to explain what it means. This message is also given on page 101 when Charlie describes why he resents Dr. Nemur. He makes the same mistake as the others when they look at a feeble-minded person and laugh because they don't understand there are human feelings involved. He doesn't realize that I was a person before I came here.

Concluding statement: Read the passage on p. 101 given above to the class.

Supplementary Activities

Write:

The words "idiot," "imbecile," and "moron" were once used by professionals to describe degrees of mental retardation. Offer a hypothesis to explain why these terms are no longer used by professionals and are frowned upon for general use.

Lee, H. To Kill a Mockingbird. New York: Popular Library, 1977. (paper)

Other edition:

To Kill a Mockingbird. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1960.

NOTE: Some of the ideas (questions, statements) in this unit came from an unpublished paper by Betty Pieper, entitled "Social and Affective Growth Through the Analysis of Literature."

For the Teacher

To Kill a Mockingbird is the story of the people and events in a small Alabama town in the 1930s as seen through the eyes of a seven year old tomboy, Scout Finch, whose father was a lawyer. The book deals with the dramatic event of an innocent black man being tried for the rape of a white woman, and the townspeople's reaction against Scout's father for defending the black man to the best of his ability.

However, what gives this book universality and makes it rise above time and place is the story of Boo Radley. This sub-story begins on page one and also ends the book. Boo Radley is the innocent mockingbird it is a sin to kill.

This book shows us differentness being perceived as dangerousness, as menace. It also shows us how fears and myths about the disabled can be dissolved in children whose minds are still open.

The lesson guides provide focus only on the handicapped character in this book and the relation of other characters to him. It is assumed, in this unit as in the others, that the teacher will also deal with other important themes. In this book it is essential to deal with black-white relations as they existed in the south in the 1930s. Without such a historical perspective, some of the language and references to black people in the book will be deemed offensive, and the impact of what Atticus Finch did will be lost.

Lesson I

Theme: The disabled are often perceived as menaces, even when there is no basis in reality for this perception. The disabled are often, in fact, victimized by society.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to describe the myths created about Boo Radley which had no basis in fact.
- Students will be able to present evidence to counteract the myth that Boo Radley was a menace.
- Students will be able to describe ways in which Boo Radley was victimized by society.

Introducing the Lesson

Say to the class: "Suppose that Boo Radley participated in an intensive treatment program which miraculously returned him to a state of full functioning, understanding and communication. Now he is very anxious to explain why he had become an isolate, and what he had thought of the people in Maycomb when he was ill. I want someone to come up here as the cured Boo Radley to tell us this story." Call on a volunteer to role play Boo. Ask the student to talk for three or four minutes. Then have the other pupils ask "Boo" questions. The point of this role play is to highlight the psycho-social cause of Boo's retreat into isolation and arrest in mental development. Boo's treatment by his father for a youthful escapade is described on page 15.

After the students have asked their questions, you might pose the following questions to the class: What did Calpurnia mean when she described Mr. Radley as "the meanest man ever God blew breath into" (p. 16)? What did Atticus mean when he said that Boo was not chained to a bed or that sort of thing but that "there were other ways of making people into ghosts" (p. 16)?

Discussion Guide

Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1. What myths existed in Maycomb about Boo Radley?	That he was a malevolent phantom; that he peeped through people's windows; that his breath could cause azaleas to freeze; that he was responsible for many small stealthy crimes; that anything belonging to the Radleys would poison you. Read the passage below, from page 13, to the class.

> Inside the house lived a malevolent phantom. People said he existed, but Jem and I had never seen him. People said he went out at night when the moon was down, and peeped in windows. When people's azaleas froze in a cold snap, it was because he had breathed on them. Any stealthy small crimes committed in Maycomb were his work. Once the town was terrorized by a series of morbid nocturnal events: people's chickens and household pets were found mutilated; although the culprit was Crazy Addie, who eventually drowned himself in Barker's Eddy, people still looked at the Radley Place, unwilling to discard their initial suspicions. A Negro would not pass the Radley Place at night, he would cut across to the sidewalk opposite and whistle as he walked. The Maycomb school grounds adjoined the back of the Radley lot; from the Radley chickenyard tall pecan trees shook their fruit into the schoolyard, but the nuts lay untouched by the children: Radley pecans would kill you.

2. What feelings about Boo Radley were reflected in these myths?	Boo Radley was perceived as dangerous, as a menace. People were frightened of him. Even when evidence turned up to show that Boo was not responsible for crimes, people still mistrusted him.

3.	Describe how Boo reached out to the children; how he tried to establish communication with them	He left presents for them in the knot-hole of an oak tree at the edge of the Radley property.
4.	Why did Boo do this?	He was probably lonely. He wanted to relate, to communicate with someone, but he was no longer able to do so directly. He was also probably less afraid of children than adults.
5.	What happened to Boo's innocent attempt to communicate with the children?	It was snuffed out by his brother, just as his father probably snuffed out earlier attempts at communication. Boo was not allowed to stop being a kind of phantom. The behavior of his brother shows us how the destruction of a human being was maintained.
6.	In what other ways did Boo reach out to the children in friendliness.	He mended Jem's pants (p. 63). He put a blanket around Scout's shoulders (p. 76). He saved the children from Bob Ewell.
7.	When Boo Radley finally came out, what did he look like? How did he act?	A description is on p. 273. He had a thin frame, sickly white skin, thin cheeks, thin hair. Timid, tense, withdrawn, uncertain frightened.
8.	What is the irony of Boo saying to Scout, "Will you take me home?", in the voice of a child afraid of the dark?	The immediate irony is that he had just risked his life to struggle with a violent, vicious, armed man. The greater irony is that people were afraid of him, and imagined him as the perpetrator of a host of vicious acts.
9.	After the sheriff insists on the story that Bob Ewell had accidentally killed himself, Atticus asks Scout if she can possibly understand. Scout responds by saying that she can and that the sheriff was right because, "Well it'd be sort of like shooting a mockingbird, wouldn't it (p. 279)?" What did Scout mean by this?	She meant that it would be a sin to identify Boo Radley as the one who had killed Bob Ewell because he then would be subjected to painful, public exposure and a trial. It would mean hurting a person because he had done his utmost to perform a good deed, without regard to his own life.

Concluding statement: Boo Radley was feared and shunned by the people of Maycomb. He was considered a malevolent being. In truth he was a frightened, lonely creature who reached out with his entire being to help a couple of children. The qualities he demonstrated were the opposite of those attributed to him.

Supplementary Activities

Composition

Select one of the topics below and write a brief essay on it.

1. Suppose that Boo Radley were a real person living today. Would he be viewed the same way? Would he still be thought of as a menace and blamed for various crimes or bizarre happenings?

2. How did Atticus Finch and a few other adults show their understanding and sensitivity to Boo Radley? (Give examples.) Is there more that they could and should have done to help him?

Lesson II

Theme: Conceptions of the disabled can be changed.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to describe the change in the children's perceptions of Boo Radley.
- Students will be able to identify the factors responsible for the children's change in perception.
- Students will be better able to treat myths about the mentally disabled person critically.

Introducing the Lesson

Say to the class: "Jem Finch had never seen Boo Radley. Yet he gave a detailed description of him to his friend Dill. How did Jem describe Boo Radley?" In fact, Jem's description sounded like that of a Halloween monster, a kind of Frankenstein. After the students have responded, read the passage below to them:

> Jem gave a reasonable description of Boo: Boo was about six-and-a-half feet tall, judging from his tracks; he dined on raw squirrels and any cats he could catch, that's why his hands were bloodstained--if you ate an animal raw, you could never wash the blood off. There was a long jagged scar that ran across his face; what teeth he had were yellow and rotten; his eyes popped, and he drooled most of the time (p. 17).

Summary Statement: "In the absence of adequate information, we create images from the myths surrounding poorly understood people and situations. In this way the myths continue to grow."

Discussion Guide

	Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1.	One summer Jem and Scout and Dill play a game called "Boo Radley." What is this game like?	It's dramatic play or role playing, in which all the stories heard and imagined about the Radleys are enacted. The children embellish the plot, building upon and exaggerating the characteristics in the myth.
2.	Why did the children play this game over and over again?	Boo Radley was fascinating to the children. They were afraid of him but yet they wanted to know more about him. "Playing out" is a way used by children to try to work through frightening or puzzling situations, a way of trying to understand and cope with them.
3.	Atticus Finch told his daughter: "You never really know a man until you stand in his shoes and walk around in them (p. 282)," "until you climb into his skin (p. 34)." What did he mean by this?	He meant that one has to consider things from the point of view of the individual in question in order to understand his behavior. The children were, in a way, attempting to do this in their dramatic play.
4.	When did Jem begin to perceive Boo Radley in a different light, not as a menacing phantom? What made his perception begin to change?	Boo Radley's actual behavior led Jem to begin to doubt his conceptualization of Boo. He probably began to question his assumptions about Boo Radley after he couldn't figure out who had put the Indian head coins in the tree. Boo Radley appeared to be the only possibility, after his first guesses didn't fit. With each new gift in the tree, Jem's suspicions increased. When he found his pants mended, he guessed who had done it. When someone put a blanket around Scout's shoulders as she was standing near the Radley's home watching a fire, he knew. Read the passage on the following page to the class to illustrate Jem's perception of Boo Radley in the process of change.

> "...Mr. Nathan put cement in that tree, Atticus, an' he did it to stop us findin' things--he's crazy, I reckon, like they say, but Atticus, I swear to God he ain't ever harmed us, he ain't ever hurt us, he coulda cut my throat from ear to ear that night but he tried to mend my pants instead...he ain't ever hurt us, Atticus--" (p. 76).

5. Why was Jem able to change his view of Boo Radley when he was given information contradictory to it, while many of the townspeople didn't do this?	Jem's mind was open to new information and conceptions. His original view of Boo was based on the information available to him. When better information became available, he was able to incorporate it and shift in his thinking. Many of the people of Maycomb were not open to new information, were not able or willing to shift their thinking, or to put themselves in the skin of another person.
6. By the time Scout reached the third grade she had begun to feel remorse about the games she and Jem and Dill had played about the Radleys. Now she had a different kind of fantasy about Boo Radley. What was it like?	She imagined that he would be a friendly neighbor that she could speak to comfortably. Have one of the students read the description of her fantasy as given below.

> Maybe someday we would see him. I imagined how it would be: when it happened, he'd just be sitting in the swing when I came along. "Hidy do, Mr. Arthur," I would say, as if I had said it every afternoon of my life. "Evening, Jean Louise," he would say, as if he had said it every afternoon of my life, "right pretty spell we're having, isn't it?" "Yes sir, right pretty," I would say, and go on (p. 245).

7. What does this fantasy tell us about Scout's feelings toward Boo Radley?	She now thought of him as a person rather than a monster, and a rather nice person at that.

8. When Scout finally did meet Boo Radley, what did she do?	She said: "Hey, Boo," a form of friendly greeting.
9. How was the situation different from Scout's early fantasys about Boo?	She had expected Boo to be terrifying and herself to be terrified. Instead, she found him shy and gentle, and she found herself helping him. Read the following passage to the class:

> "Come along, Mr. Arthur," I heard myself saying, "you don't know the house real well. I'll just take you to the porch, sir."
>
> He looked down at me and nodded (p.274).

10. In the selection just read, Scout displayed consideration for Boo. Give examples of other actions which displayed her sensitivity to Boo Radley.	She responded to his nonverbal messages, as when he nodded toward the front door and Scout took this to mean that he wanted to say good night to Jem. She took him to Jem's room (p. 280). She wanted to protect him from further mockery. Thus, when Boo asked her to take him home, she asked him to take her arm so that he would look like a gentleman escorting a young girl (p. 281).
11. Why was Scout able to relate to Arthur Radley with consideration and sensitivity?	Because these traits were an intrinsic part of her. She had seen them displayed by her father throughout her life. They had been held up to her as a code of human behavior. And she saw them displayed now by her father (and Sheriff Tate and Dr. Reynolds) in relation to Arthur Radley. Atticus Finch introduced Scout to "Mr. Arthur," and moved everyone to the porch rather than the living room because he knew that Arthur Radley would be more comfortable on the porch where the light wasn't so strong.

Concluding statement: Once Scout recognized that Arthur Radley was a frightened, lonely person rather than a malevolent creature, her naturally decent "instincts" (values and habits) became active. She was able to overcome the myths and superstitions surrounding him.

Supplementary Activity

Composition

Is there a mentally handicapped person in your community whom you have feared, mocked and/or shunned? If there is, record all the stories you have heard or imagined about him/her. Then record what you have actually witnessed of this person's behavior. Compare your actual observations with these stories. To what extent were the two congruent?

Now, observe the handicapped person again. Look for signs of congruence or incongruence between the behavior you observe and what you had believed about this individual.

Greenberg, J. I Never Promised You a Rose Garden.
New York: New American Library, 1971. (paper)

Other edition:

I Never Promised You a Rose Garden. New York:
Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964.

For the Teacher

I Never Promised You a Rose Garden is the fictionalized account of a young girl's long, hard struggle with schizophrenia. The book attempts to help the reader understand the behavior of a person with severe emotional problems by showing how the world is experienced by such a person. Several important issues are touched on in this book, including psycho-social causes of mental illness, fear of the mentally ill, treatment of the mentally ill, and the effects of severe emotional disturbance on the family.

The mental health system underwent a major upheaval during the 1970s. Under the pressure of court decisions thousands of residents of mental institutions were released. This deinstitutionalization movement was, unfortunately, not balanced by comprehensive, community-based mental health programs and supports. Severe dislocations resulted. There has been a large increase in "street people," homeless people living barely marginal lives in run-down hotels, or in proprietary homes where the care is much less adequate than in institutions. The deinstitutionalization movement was a response to poor institution care, lack of treatment and the abrogation of civil rights represented in involuntary commitment. The promise of this start was not realized because of lack of adequate plans and programs to provide satisfactory alternatives.

One of the hindrances to community-based treatment of persons with emotional disturbance is the reaction of the general population to persons considered mentally ill. There is strong resistance to the establishment of mental health clinics, rehabilitation centers and halfway houses in most communities. In spite of the fact that most former residents of mental institutions are not dangerous, conceptualizations of the mentally ill as menaces, as diseased organisms and as subhumans or inhuman organisms persist.

Lesson III of this unit focuses on the fear, stereotypes and misconceptions associated with mental illness. Some professionals prefer to avoid the term "mental illness" because of the stigma attached to it. The term "severe emotional disturbance" has been used in this unit interchangeably with "mental illness," but there was no attempt to shun the latter term, which is still widely used, and which is used by the author of the book being studied.

This book may be difficult for some students to understand because of the strange language of Deborah's secret world. Thus the discussion guide in Lesson I focuses on Chapters 1 and 2 of the book to give the students a start in understanding it.

Additional Information about Mental Illness

Trends in Mental Health: Unlocking the Mystery of Mental Illness. National Institute of Mental Health, 1977.

(Single copies of the above pamphlet are available free from:
National Institute of Mental Health, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20857.)

Lesson I*

Theme: Mentally ill people are not so different from you and me.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to identify experiences common to most people which resemble aspects of the experience of mental illness.
- Students will begin to perceive the experience of mental illness as less bizarre and more understandable.

Introducing the Lesson

"Think about a dream you had recently. What was different about the way things happened in the dream and the way things happen in real life? (Cues: Did the people act the way people usually do? What kinds of feelings did you experience? How intense were these feelings?)" Allow students to respond. The points to be elicited in the discussion are that dreams do not follow the same rules of logic which govern our conscious, waking activities, but they have meaning nonetheless; and that many dreams are characterized by intense emotional states. Then continue: "I Never Promised You a Rose Garden is the story of a young girl who has retreated into a world of her imagination. Her world resembles our dream world in many ways: in its bizarre, unreal quality; in the intensity of emotions; in the masking of real people and events; in the use of symbols.

All of us have had experiences which resemble Deborah's fantasy world in some ways. How many of you had imaginary playmates when you were young children? Tell us about them. (Students respond.)

How many of you had special places where you went to think or act-out ideas you couldn't share with grown-ups? Describe the way you felt about these "secrets of childhood." (Students respond.)

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*This lesson may be appropriately used after the students have read the first two or three chapters of the book.

How many of you had secret (made-up) languages that only you and your close friends knew? What needs did this satisfy? (Students respond.)

Deborah also had secret places and people, and a secret language, but there was a difference between the normal fantasy activities of childhood and Deborah's fantasy world. What was this difference? (Students respond.)

Summary: Deborah's fantasy world became too important to her. She retreated into it more and more. It became more real to her than the real world, and it increasingly isolated her from real people.

We are going to examine the book I Never Promised You a Rose Garden to see what we can learn from it about the experience of mental illness."

Discussion Guide

Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
Chapter I	
1. This book opens up with a mother, father and daughter in a car, taking a trip. The mother says that the trip was like a pleasure trip with their lovely young daughter. Is it like a pleasure trip? What belies the mother's words? Why is this trip very different from a pleasure trip?	The parents are taking their daughter to a mental institution. They are torn with guilt, overwhelmed with fear and sadness.
2. Why does the mother make such a statement? What does it make you begin to think about her?	The mother wants to maintain a perfect surface, unmarred by unpleasant realities or feelings. She probably thinks she's doing the best thing for her daughter by acting this way. Read to the class the mother's statement from p. 10.

> "On my surface...there must be no sign showing,
> no seam--a perfect surface." And she smiled.

3. Do these parents love their daughter? How do you know?	Yes. Have two students read the dialogue between the parents on page 11.

> "Why are we sending her away?"
>
> "The doctors say she has to go," Esther whispered back, lying rigid and looking toward the silent wall.
>
> "The doctors." Jacob had never wanted to put them all through the experience, even from the beginning.
>
> "It's a good place," she said, a little louder because she wanted to make it so.
>
> "They call it a mental hospital, but it's a place, Es, a place where they put people away. How can it be a good place for a girl--almost a child!"
>
> "Oh, God, Jacob," she said, "how much did it take out of us to make the decision?"

4. What does Deborah do to get away from the problems in the real world?	She retreats to a world of her own creation.
5. What is this world called?	The Kingdom of Yr.
6. What kind of places does this world include?	The Fourth Level, which is a place devoid of emotions, a place where you can withdraw from emotional struggle. There is the Pit, which is not yet described in Chapter I.
7. What does Jacob Blau feel when his daughter is taken away?	Anger and rage at the world for the loss of his daughter. Anger at his daughter for withdrawing from him. Pity and love for his daughter. Fear of the future for her.
8. What do these feelings do to him? How do they express themselves?	They express themselves in psychosomatic symptoms, namely an ulcer.

Chapter II

9. What else do we learn about Deborah's inner world in Chapter II?	Yr, the world of Deborah's mind into which she retreats has both a soothing, freeing aspect and a painful aspect, punishing aspect.

10. Some of the names in this book have special meanings. In Chapter II Deborah talks of a falling God named Anterrabae. Why did the author select (make up) this name? What could it stand for?	"Terra," the middle syllable means earth, but spelled another way it is terror.
11. Why the name "Yr" for her imaginary world?	Deborah refers to the real world as Here. "Yr" is the alternative to Here. It is a strange word because it stands for a strange world, but yet it is not so very different in sound from Here.
12. What about the psychiatrist's name, Dr. Fried? What significance might it have?	Dr. Fried (frēed) is the honest, sensitive and caring person who is going to help Deborah become free of the demons which taunt her.
13. Does Deborah want to be helped? How do you know?	She decides to tell the interviewing psychiatrist about her inner world so that he will understand her need for help and then she asks him directly: "Now are you going to help me (p. 16)?" Her wrist slashing was also very likely a cry for help.
14. What did Dr. Fried see in mentally ill persons that many other professionals working with them did not?	She saw a hunger to be able to communicate, share and love (p. 17). She saw them strive to understand sanity. She saw hidden strengths to work with (p. 19).

Concluding statement: Dr. Fried's recognition of the hidden strengths within even the most severely disturbed persons is what enabled her to reach and help such people. She recognized and nurtured Deborah's striving toward health, even when it was hidden beneath layers of bizarre and self-destructive behavior.

Supplementary Activities

Composition

1. Select and read a fairy tale. Analyze the magical thinking in the fairy tale. Describe why this kind of thinking is acceptable in fairy tales but not in real life. Give illustrations from Deborah's experience in the book.

or

2. Describe how you and other people you know well react when depressed and/or anxious. (Common reactions include shutting oneself off alone in a room; refusing to talk to others; staying under the covers in bed; crying; overeating or undereating; overreacting with anger to minor annoyances.) Compare these reactions with Deborah's response to unhappiness in the real world. What do her responses have in common with the reactions of most other people? In what ways are they different? (The major point of this exercise is the recognition that disturbed behavior is an exaggeration of normal reactions.)

Lesson II*

Theme: What is mental illness?
How is the family involved in mental illness?

Objectives:

- .Students will be able to conceptualize emotional disturbance as a continuum from mild to severe.
- .Students will be able to identify and describe examples of disturbed behavior which is not generally labelled by society as mental illness.
- .Students will recognize various forms of struggle with one's self-concept and identity as central to mental illness.
- .Students will be able to describe possible effects of severe emotional disturbance on family members.

Introducing the Lesson

"At the beginning of Chapter 8 Deborah's mother is reading a report from the hospital and she says: 'Disturbed...what does disturbed mean?' What does disturbed mean? What does mentally ill mean? Who is emotionally disturbed? Can anyone become mentally ill?"

The point of the discussion is to elicit a view of emotional disturbance as a continuum from mild to severe, with mental illness at the severe end of the continuum. Another point to be elicited is that severe stress may trigger emotional disturbance in almost anyone. Sometimes the disturbance is transient or temporary. Sometimes it becomes chronic because of problems or predispositions which the individual had prior to the stressful event, or because of changes in the person's life which present continual stress. Ask the students to give common examples of situational stresses which often lead to transient emotional disturbance. Examples include: the death of a spouse, child or parent; the break-up of a marriage; serious physical illness.

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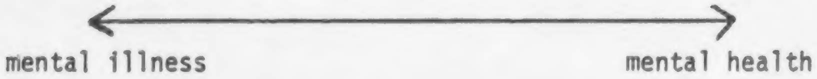
*Students should have read the first hundred pages of the book prior to this lesson.

Draw the continuum below on the chalkboard.



Ask the students to place the following characters at points along the continuum: Deborah, Esther Blau, Jacob Blau, Hobbs, McPherson. Each placement should be justified with descriptions of behavior. For example, McPherson might be placed near the mental health end of the continuum because he was obviously secure about who he was and happy with this self-concept. When he was challenged by a patient with the statement, "Without those keys you wouldn't know yourself from us!" he responded by laughing at himself and saying "We're not so different (p. 88)." Hobbs, on the other hand, would be placed at the mental illness end of the continuum not only because he committed suicide, but also because of the way he felt about himself before then. The passage below from page 66 may be read and discussed in the process of selecting placements along the continuum for McPherson and Hobbs.

> Hobbs was a little brutal sometimes, but it was more than that. He was frightened of the craziness he saw around him because it was an extension of something inside himself. He wanted people to be crazier and more bizarre than they really were so that he could see the line which separated him, his inclinations and random thoughts, and his half-wishes, from the full-bloomed, exploded madness of the patients. McPherson, on the other hand, was a strong man, even a happy one. He wanted the patients to be like him, and the closer they got to being like him the better he felt.

Discussion Guide

	Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1.	Let's take a closer look at Deborah's severe emotional disturbance or mental illness. What did it consist of? What was it made up of?	Accept all student responses at this point. In the next few interchanges you will help the students distinguish between causes, central problems and symptoms.
2.	At one point in the book a substitute psychiatrist is working with Deborah. At the end of a session she says to him, "Please, Doctor, my difference is not my sickness (p. 160)." What did she mean?	She meant that her strange behavior was a reflection of her illness. It was not the central core of it.
3.	If Deborah's bizarre behavior is a reflection of her illness, what is the core of her illness?	Her bad feelings about herself. Read the following passages to the class:

> "Do you know why you are here?" the Doctor said.
> "Clumsiness. Clumsiness is first and then we have a list: lazy, wayward, headstrong, self-centered, fat, ugly, mean, tactless, and cruel. Also a liar. That category includes subheads: (a) False blindness, imaginary pains causing real doubling-up, untrue lapses of hearing, lying leg injuries, fake dizziness, and unproved and malicious malingerings; (b) Being a bad sport. Did I leave out unfriendliness?...Also unfriendliness (p. 23)."

> "I am poisonous and I hate it. I am going to be destroyed in shame and degradation and I hate it. I hate myself...(p. 169)"

4.	Why does Deborah feel this way about herself? Why does she hate herself? Why does she think others perceive her as ugly and mean?	The author implies that a combination of events caused Deborah's illness. These include the medically caused incontinence which was treated as a character defect (p. 36); the trauma of painful surgery; the shame about something being wrong with her female, secret part; the lies of adults important in her life; the religious prejudice directed against her.

5. While the author of this book suggests psycho-social causes for Deborah's mental illness, what other theories have been proposed to explain severe disturbances such as Deborah's?	Deborah's illness can be referred to as schizophrenia. One current theoretical stream relating to schizophrenia postulates a physiological predisposition to severe disturbance, or a special vulnerability in the face of environmental stress.
6. When Dr. Fried tells Deborah, "You are very sick, indeed (p. 24)," Deborah seems relieved. Why?	Because she had been told many times by her family, teachers and doctors that there was nothing wrong with her, implying that her behavior was a matter of her conscious choice, that her complaints were unjustified, that she could act "normally" if she wanted to.
7. For a long time the adults around her didn't believe that anything was wrong with Deborah, both before her physical problem (the tumor) was recognized, and then again after the physical problem was corrected. How did Deborah feel about that?	She knew there was something the matter with her. Still, the perceptions of others influenced the way she felt about herself, and she began to feel "no-good," like a liar, a complainer, an unfriendly and mean person.
8. Why was Deborah's very real disturbance in thinking and relating not recognized sooner as requiring help?	We are geared toward thinking of illness in physical terms. If we can't find a physical cause we ascribe problems to the category of malingering or bad character. Thus many children with emotional disturbances or learning disabilities are accused of being lazy and not trying.
9. Deborah's family loved her very much, yet they contributed to her problem in several ways. What ways?	Her mother by not being honest to Deborah. Her father by not recognizing his own feelings and by responding to them in ways that frightened Deborah. Her parents (and grandfather) by causing her to live in an area where Deborah was a social outcast, an experience reinforced by a camp where she was a social anomaly. Her parents (and grandfather) by denying that Deborah had problems which required help, and by backing off too easily from providing that help even when the need for it was recognized.

10. Deborah's mental illness affected her family strongly. In what ways did it do so?

(a) Her parents' lives became filled with constant fear and anxiety and hurt. Fun was no longer a part of it. After Deborah was placed in the institution, her father realized this. Read the passage below to the class:

> Jacob realized even as he denied it, that before Deborah had gone he had been tiptoeing, deferring, frightened of something nameless for a long time.
>
> One day a group of Suzy's school friends trooped in, laughing and joking, and Esther asked them all to dinner on the spur of the moment. Suzy shone, and when they had gone, Jacob said good-naturedly, "Those stupid kids. Were we ever that stupid? The little one with that cap!" He laughed, and catching himself in the real enjoyment, said, "My god--I laughed so much tonight. When before did I have so much fun!" And then: "Has it really been *that* long? Years?"
>
> "Yes," she said, "it has been that long (p. 29)."

(b) Suzy's relationship to her parents was secondary to their relationship with Deborah. Suzy's relationship to peers was dependent upon Deborah's state and how it affected her parents. Everything revolved around Deborah. Have students read the selections which follow:

> It was Debby. It was always Debby. For a moment she wondered if, were she far away and sick, *she* could ever make them suffer so palpably. She realized suddenly that she would be afraid to try; she would lose--almost certainly. Fear of wanting to prove that failure once and for all, guilt at foreseeing such a failure, and anger at Debby who had all the love, made Suzy turn from one parent to the other and say, "All right! She's not lying in a ditch somewhere. She has doctors and stuff! Why is everybody always crying over poor, poor Debby!" She left the table angrily...(p. 78).

She heard Suzy talking with a friend on the phone. She was saying, "But I don't know...it's not just something you can plan for....I told you. My sister Debbie is very sick. No.... They get these reports every month. No...it's not that. It's that if the next one is bad, they won't feel like having anything here.... Sure. Well, I'll let you know if it's all right" (p. 32).

End the discussion by reading the following passage from p. 32:

A sudden, helpless anger leaped into Esther's head, and her eyes burned with it for a moment. Deborah! Deborah—what has she done to us all!

Supplementary Activities

Composition: (Select one of the topics below.)

1. Make a list of all the untruths told to Deborah. Describe why and how they hurt her. Discuss why we lie to children.

2. Explain why the patients attacked the attendant Ellis. Why did McPherson say to Deborah: "Do you think the sick people are all in hospitals?" What did he mean? (Give examples.)

3. Suppose that you were Suzy, Deborah's sister. Deborah has just completed her first visit home since she entered an institution. You decide to express your feelings about Deborah in your diary. Write that diary account as Suzy might have written it.

Lesson III*

Theme: Societal attitudes toward the mentally ill.

Objectives:

- .Students will be able to describe stereotypes surrounding persons with severe emotional disturbance.
- .Students will be able to identify the connections between conceptualizations of mentally ill persons and treatment of the mentally ill.
- .Students will be able to describe current approaches to the conceptualization and treatment of mentally ill persons.
- .Students will be able to describe some of the current problems resulting from a shift in the way mentally ill persons are treated.

Introducing the Lesson

Ask the students to give their first associations to the phrase "mentally ill." What kind of image does it conjure up? Write the student responses on the chalkboard. You may also want to ask what kinds of words or phrases are used to describe mentally ill people (nuts, cuckoo, cracked, crazy as a bedbug), and what impressions or feelings these words convey. Some of the students may respond with associations of fear and repulsion.

Have a student read the passage below from p. 127:

> Who had not heard all the old-style high melodrama of insanity; of the madwoman in Jane Eyre, of bedlam, of the hundreds of dark houses with high walls and little hope, of lesser dramas in lesser memories, and of maniacs who murdered and passed on the taints of their blood to menace the future? "Modern Science" had given the official lie to much of this, but beneath the surface of facts, the older fears remained in the minds of

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*This lesson should be implemented after the students have finished reading the book.

> the well no less than of the sick. People paid lip service to new theories and new proofs, but often their belief was no more than the merest veneer, yielding at a scratch to the bare and honest terror, the accretion of ten thousand generations of fear and magic.

Ask the students to explain what Esther Blau meant by that last sentence. (That facts alone would not undo or remove the stigma associated with mental illness.) Was she right? Do the old associations between mental illness and maniacal behavior, bedlam and even murder still grip us? How do you know? ((We fight hard to keep mentally ill persons away, to lock them up and throw away the keys.)

Concluding statement: According to the author these associations are still very much with us, determining the way we treat mentally ill persons, and very often hindering their progress. Let's look at some of these associations more carefully.

Discussion Guide

Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1. After observing a new attendant, Deborah says: "He's afraid he'll catch what we have (p. 87)." Can you catch mental illness? Is it passed on by "craziness germs" the way measles can be passed on?	There are no germs that can transmit mental illness from one person to another. It's not a disease in this sense. If it is "catching" in any sense it may be so for young children who are brought up by mentally ill parents (mothers in particular) because they learn a disturbed way of thinking and relating. Some theorists also believe that there may be a genetic basis for some forms of mental illness, i.e., that some people may inherit a predisposition toward mental illness.
2. If mental illness is not catching, why did the patients think that "Hobbs had caught it, and died from it too (p. 87)."	The patients knew that Hobbs had been mentally ill and that the thin veneer covering up his mental disturbance had been worn away by the abrasions of the patients. They were not speaking literally when they said he caught it.

3. Again near the end of the book one of the patients, Mary, says: "I wonder if insanity is catching. Maybe the hospital could sell us for antibodies (p. 255)." Why does the author repeat this idea again at the end of the book?	The author obviously feels that the old superstition of the mentally ill as diseased and dangerous organisms is still with us. The hospital using the patients as antibodies is a reflection of the "less than human" conceptualization of mentally ill persons.
4. To what extent is there truth to the stereotype of the mentally ill as dangerous maniacs?	Most mentally ill persons hurt only themselves and/or their families. A very small proportion of people identified as mentally ill are violent or destructive toward others. Most violence and violent crimes are not committed by persons labelled as mentally ill.
5. If most persons called mentally ill are not dangerous, why do we so fear them that we attempt to isolate them from the rest of society?	Because we do not understand their behavior. Because we cannot predict their behavior. Because they violate our expectations about how people will behave. All of these things make us very uneasy and fearful.
6. Let's look at another conceptualization of the mentally ill. Mary says to the new attendant who has just heard a woman scream: "She's only a person, you know (p. 87)." What was she telling him? Why should he have thought that the woman screaming was anything other than a patient?	One common conceptualization of the mentally ill is that they are not human. This can include the idea that they are less-than-human, i.e., like animals or vegetables, and the idea that they are inhuman, i.e., possessed, demonic. By saying that this woman was only a person, Mary was saying that this woman had no supernatural power; she could not harm him anymore than any other person could; she was no demon. It is now believed that many of the people burned at the stake as witches in Salem were mentally ill persons.
7. What is the connection between the images and associations we have of mentally ill persons and the way we treated them? What was done with or to persons thought of as mentally ill?	They were warehoused in large institutions far from any communities where other people lived. They were also treated as if they were less than human.

8. Aside from abuses of patients by disturbed personnel, what built-in problems are there in treating mentally ill persons in institutions, problems that make growth toward better mental health difficult?	(a) Models of healthy behavior are scarce. (b) There are limited decision making possibilities in institutions. Residents may become more dependent and less able to handle decision-making situations in the future because of this; or, they may rebel at the limited opportunities for self-direction and respond destructively. (c) It is hard to maintain, much less clarify or improve one's self-image under the impersonality of most large institutions. (d) Deborah's on-going individual therapy by a skilled clinician was not a situation experienced by many residents of large mental institutions. Until recently, most residents received custodial care only, or custodial care plus large dosages of drugs. (e) Institutional placement widens the gulf between the disturbed individual and his family, between the disturbed individual and the rest of society. It makes return to the family and society more difficult.
9. Deborah benefitted from the treatment she received in the institution. She needed help, but did she need to be institutionalized to receive it? Are there other alternatives to institutionalization for persons like Deborah?	The 1970s have witnessed a major movement away from institutional placement. The deinstitutionalization movement is based on findings of gross neglect, abuse and dehumanizing treatment in institutions. There was very little treatment going on in institutions. Many persons deteriorated considerably after placement. Re-entry into society became more difficult. Today mental health resources are being reorganized to stress treatment in mental health facilities in the community.
10. Under a policy of deinstitutionalization, thousands of persons have been released from mental institutions. Unfortunately, there has not always been a place in a community for them to go to, or a plan to meet their continuing needs. What has happened to some of these people?	(a) Some of them have become "shopping bag people" or street people, who carry all of their possessions with them and sleep in hallways, parks, bus terminals, etc. (b) Some others live in single rooms in run-down hotels and spend most of their days wandering the streets.

11. What can be done about this situation? What is happening in reaction to it?	States are beginning to shift priorities and dollars from institutions to community-based systems, so that the programs will increasingly be where the people in need are. However, it is unlikely that plans and dollars will accommodate the needs of all of the thousands of former residents of mental institutions in the foreseeable future. Some of these persons probably need to live in supervised half-way houses or group homes. Others may need periodic stays in residential treatment centers; others need rehabilitation programs. Community opposition to residential centers and clinics for former residents of mental institutions is high.
12. What is it like to have been considered "crazy," to have been in a mental institution, and then try to become part of the outside world?	People may be fearful of you or morbidly curious. They may shun you or at the very least feel uneasy with you. Have one of the students read Carla's response on p. 202.

> "In lots of jobs you have to show your 'sanity papers' and they make a big thing of it, but the best people on the outside make you feel honored to share the name 'person' with them. The part that's hardest is the feeling you get when everyone is polite and says 'good morning' and 'good night' while the distance between you and them is getting wider and wider. The doctors say that it's the fault of the sick one--my fault. If I were less anxious, they say, it would be easier for friendships to come, but that's easy to say. I don't think any of the doctors ever tried to break into a new group with a heavy stigma on their heads and having their first acceptance in that group hinge on pity or morbid fascination."

13. How did the town respond to Deborah's attempts to participate?	With politeness but not friendliness or acceptance. When Deborah invited her hymnbook mate out for a soda, the girl turned white and stammered her decline. The one exception was her landlady who treated her as she would have any other 19 year old, who left her 2 month old granddaughter in Deborah's care.

14. Until recently, few mental institutions had programs of transitional living like the one in which Deborah participated. Why was this program essential for Deborah?	Deborah needed continued help. She was not yet ready to be completely independent. She was also not ready to return to her parent's home.
15. At the end of this story, Deborah chooses the real world. Is she then "cured?" Will she be free of the institution, of drugs, of therapy, of regressions?	Deborah may no longer need an institution and her regressions may become less severe. However, she may continue to need drug therapy indefinitely, either continuously or on an intermittent basis. She may also continue to need psychotherapeutic support for some time.

Supplementary Activities

Observation/Composition

During a one-week period of time keep notes on all of the "shopping bag people" you see. Then write a description of their ages, dress, possessions, behavior and the places used by them. What kind of system or programs would you propose for improving the lives of "shopping bag people"?

Reading/Composition

- Read the book One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest by K. Kesey (New York: New American Library, 1962). Compare the institution described there with the one pictured in I Never Promised You a Rose Garden.

- Read a series on mental patient release which appeared in the New York Times on November 18, 19 and 20, 1979. Compare the problems of institutionalization with the problems created by wholesale releases from institutions during the 1970s. ("Mental-Patient Release Program Leaves Many to Face Harsh Fate," New York Times, November 18, 1979, pp. 1 and 60.)

- Read the pamphlet Trends in Mental Health: Unlocking the Mystery of Mental Illness (National Institute of Mental Health, 1977). Compare the description of schizophrenia presented in this pamphlet with the portrayal of Deborah.

McCullers, C. The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter.
New York: Bantam Books, 1953. (paper)

Other edition:

The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter. Boston: Houghton
Mifflin, 1940.

For the Teacher

The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter begins with the statement: "In the town there were two mutes, and they were always together." Thus begins the story of John Singer, one of these deaf mutes. John Singer was not rejected and shunned by the people in his town, as are many persons with disabilities. He was respected, sometimes almost worshipped. Others ascribed almost supernatural powers of understanding and compassion to him. Ironically, this perception of Singer as a superhuman being gave him little comfort. What Singer needed was friendship, love and understanding. He needed to be able to share his thoughts and feelings, just as others shared theirs with him. He needed to be treated as a man, not as a superhuman being.

Because John Singer could not speak, the people around him assumed he had no need to express himself. Because he accepted them, they thought he understood. Because he voiced no complaints, they thought he was not troubled. Because he made no demands, they thought he was happy.

But John Singer was not happy. He was desperately lonely after the death of the only other person with whom he could share his thoughts. Because he saw no way of filling this void, life seemed worthless, and John Singer ended his lonely existence.

The aloneness, the sense of being cut-off, which John Singer experienced is still experienced today by many deaf persons living in the hearing world. Until recent years most deaf children who received an education did so in special residential schools. From the age of six to adulthood they lived largely in a world of deaf children. Even though they were taught speech, it remained foreign and unnatural for them, as did many of the concepts expressed in speech. The hearing world was often perceived as a difficult and frightening place.

Today many deaf children are educated in community schools or special day schools. The hearing world is not as foreign. However, sign language remains the natural language of a large portion of the deaf population. Speech is their second language, and one with which they may never feel completely comfortable or adequate.

Lip reading (speech reading) is the means used by deaf persons to understand the speech of others. Lip reading is an ability which varies from person to person, but even the best speech reader can only grasp part of what is said since some sounds are impossible to distinguish from one another on the basis of mouth formation or movement.

In addition to or because of these communication difficulties, deaf children are often isolates in their own communities. They have few friends or playmates, and this situation gets worse as they move toward adolescence.

Thus, few persons who become deaf before they acquire speech feel completely comfortable in the milieu of the hearing. Many prefer to socialize within the deaf community. The barriers between deaf and hearing persons are not easy to overcome. *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* is still timely today.

Additional Resources on Relationships Between Deaf and Hearing Persons

1. *Beyond the Sound Barrier*. Washington, DC: Regional Rehabilitation Research Institute on Attitudinal, Legal and Leisure Barriers, 1978. (1828 L Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036 - $0.50.)

   This pamphlet shows how and why misunderstandings may arise between deaf and hearing persons.

2. Greenberg, J. "And Sarah Laughed." In J. Greenberg, *Rites of Passage*. New York: Avon, 1973. (paper)

   This short story focuses on the difficulty in communication between deaf and hearing family members.

3. Spradley, T. S., & Spradley, J. P. *Deaf Like Me*. New York: Random House, 1978.

   This is a beautiful non-fictional account of parents striving to find the best way to help their deaf child learn to understand the world and find a way to communicate with the people in her life.

Lesson I

Theme: Everyone needs to communicate with others.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to describe the problems in communication which deaf individuals experience.
- Students will be able to identify some of the ways in which deaf persons deal with their need for communication and companionship.

Introducing the Lesson:

Announce that for the next 8-10 minutes everyone (including you) will communicate only by mouthing words, reading lips (speech reading) and gesturing. Then begin the lesson by asking the students (with mouth movement only) how they felt about the book. Keep calling on students until one of them understands the question and addresses it. Then ask the students for a synopsis of the book. Again call on students until someone shows that he/she has understood the question, and answers it.

When these activities have taken place, or when 8-10 minutes have elapsed, tell the students that they can use their voices again. Ask them:

(1) What difficulties in communication they encountered (e.g., When the student who was reciting faced the teacher, the other students couldn't read his/her lips. It was difficult to figure out what was being said on the basis of lip reading. It was difficult to make oneself understood.)?

(2) How they felt during this experience.

(3) How this simulated situation differed from the real experience of being deaf. (They knew that this experience of not being able to speak or hear was a temporary and fake situation. They had had 15 or 16 years of experience in using speech and hearing in communication. They did not have experience in using speech reading.)

Make a concluding statement to the effect that being cut off from the world of speech and hearing can lead to problems in understanding, feelings of isolation and feelings of inadequacy.

Discussion Guide

Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1. Let's examine how John Singer felt about living in the world of the hearing.	Read the description below of how John Singer felt without Antonopoulos.

> He had been left in an alien land. Alone. He had opened his eyes and around him there was much he could not understand. He was bewildered (p. 173).

Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
2. What did McCullers mean by this statement? (Why did Singer feel he was in an alien land? Why was there so much he didn't understand?)	It was an alien land because it was a land where people spoke with their voices while Singer could only speak with his hands. It was an alien land because people could hear speech while he could only watch lip movements and try to figure out what words they stood for. It was an alien land because he didn't understand the people in it--what they wanted, why they were struggling, and what they meant by some of the ideas they expressed. He didn't understand because he had been cut off from the world of abstract ideas partly by his deafness and partly by the limited existence he led.
3. Why didn't Singer speak? Can't deaf people learn to speak?	Some deaf people can learn to speak understandably, but their enunciation and inflectional patterns are almost always noticeably different. Sometimes people respond to this difference negatively. Moreover, most persons who become deaf before they have acquired speech do not feel completely comfortable or competent in expressing themselves through speech. It is like a second language to them.

Read to the class the description of how John Singer felt about using speech.

> Then finally he had been taught to speak.
> At the school he was thought to be very intelligent. He learned the lessons before the rest of the pupils. But he could never become used to speaking with his lips. It was not natural to him, and his tongue felt like a whale in his mouth. From the blank expression of people's faces to whom he talked in this way he felt that his voice must be like the sound of some animal or that there was something disgusting in his speech. It was painful for him to try to talk with his mouth...(p. 8).

4. What was John Singer's natural language? Why?	Sign language. It had been the first language he had learned, and it was a language for which he had all the abilities necessary--good vision, good motor control, intelligence. His deafness did not interfere with his acquisition of this language. Read the passage below to illustrate that sign language is John Singer's natural language.

> His hands were a torment to him. They would not rest. They twitched in his sleep, and sometimes he awoke to find them shaping the words in his dreams before his face....
> And then sometimes when he was alone and his thoughts were with his friend his hands would begin to shape the words before he knew about it. Then when he realized he was like a man caught talking aloud to himself. It was almost as though he had done some moral wrong. The shame and the sorrow mixed together and he doubled his hands and put them behind him. But they would not let him rest.

5. John Singer was intelligent, polite, generous, reliable. What was his roommate Antonopoulos like?	very limited in intelligence bad tempered a heavy drinker
6. Why did a man like Singer choose Antonopoulos as a friend and roommate?	He didn't have much choice. Because he could not communicate easily with people who did not use sign language, and because he had been raised in a community of the deaf, he only felt a sense of belonging in the company of other deaf people who used sign language. Antonopoulos was the first such person he met in the town to which he moved.
7. How well did Antonopoulos understand Singer? (How much of what Singer signed did Antonopoulos understand?)	Probably not very well. Antonopoulos was very concrete and was interested in almost nothing but food. His signing was limited to the communication of eating, drinking and sleeping needs, and to prayer words.
8. Why was it that Singer felt close to Antonopoulos in spite of the fact that Antonopoulos did not respond to Singer's communications?	Because he, Singer, could use sign language comfortably with Antonopoulos. It was the natural language for both of them even thought Antonopoulos' skill and interest in using it was very limited. In Antonopoulos' presence Singer did not feel different, alien. He did not have to struggle to understand.
9. Do deaf people often prefer to socialize--to communicate and be friends with--other deaf people?	Yes. While some deaf people are completely integrated into the mainstream of society, this is rare unless the person became deaf after acquiring speech.
10. Is this a good or bad thing? (What are its advantages and disadvantages?)	It is not a moral issue, but it is an extremely important issue, one which educators and relatives of deaf individuals have been struggling with for years. The advantages of living in the deaf community include ease of communication and socialization, and feelings of belongingness. The disadvantages may include a limited choice of friends; declining interaction with hearing relatives, neighbors and co-workers; and possibly more limited career prospects.

11. What has happened in society recently in regard to deaf and other handicapped individuals which may foster more interaction between deaf and hearing persons?	(a) The schooling of deaf children in residential schools, which was almost standard prior to the 1960s, has declined greatly. (b) A federal law was passed in 1975 (The Education of All Handicapped Children Act) which states that all handicapped children must be educated in the least restrictive environment. This has led to more deaf children being educated in community schools. (c) A federal law was passed (The Rehabilitation Act of 1973) which prohibits discrimination against the handicapped in almost all areas of life. Thus deaf persons are going to be increasingly working with and using the same facilities as hearing persons.
12. If John Singer were a real person alive today might he have any friends who were not deaf?	Yes. Some deaf persons do socialize with and even marry hearing persons. Understanding of deaf persons by hearing persons is growing; and sign language is being increasingly learned by hearing persons related to deaf individuals, and by hearing persons studying to work with deaf individuals.
13. John Singer was lost without Antonopoulos because he needed to communicate and to feel understood. He did not feel understood by the other people in his life. He did not feel he could communicate with them. He writes to Antonopoulos: "I am not meant to be alone and without you who understand (p. 185)."	

Supplementary Activities

Simulation

Spend three hours on a non-school day acting as if you could not communicate through speech. Use the same techniques as John Singer did to communicate, i.e., writing, pointing and other gestures. Keep notes on: (a) Which situations proved most difficult. (b) What your feelings were during this experience. Make an oral report to your class on this experience.

Composition

Keep notes for an entire day on:

(a) All of the different activities/situations for which your hearing was essential or useful.

(b) All of the different activities/situations in which your speech was essential or useful.

What conclusions would you draw from this experience about the roles of hearing and speech in everyday life?

Lesson II

Theme: Deaf people are neither superhuman nor subhuman.

Objective:

Students will be able to describe the misconceptualization which people had about John Singer, and the causes of this misconceptualization.

Introducing the Lesson:

Write the following quotes from the book on the chalkboard.

> "His eyes made a person think that he heard things nobody else had ever heard, that he knew things no one had ever guessed before. He did not seem quite human" (p. 20).

> "When she thought of what she used to imagine was God she could only see Mister Singer with a long, white sheet around him" (p. 101-102).

> "Blount and Mick made him a sort of home-made God" (p. 198).

> "He knew things that ordinary people couldn't know" (p. 152).

Ask the students what idea about Singer runs through all these quotes. (That he is superhuman, supernatural, almost like a God.) Then make a statement to the effect that throughout history handicapped people have been perceived and treated as either subhuman or superhuman. While the treatment of people perceived as superhuman differs from the barbaric treatment of those viewed as subhuman (as witnessed by the treatment of the mentally retarded and mentally ill in institutions), it is nonetheless harmful.

Discussion Guide

Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1. Why was Singer perceived as not quite human, as almost a God?	Because he did not hear or speak, he was perceived as different and set apart from other people. Because he did not communicate his thoughts or needs, each person endowed him with whatever qualities they sought. Jake Blount, Dr. Copeland and Mick Kelley needed understanding, so they perceived him as having superpowers of understanding. Read the passage which follows to the class.

> The rumors about him grew bolder. An old Negro woman told hundreds of people that he knew the ways of spirits come back from the dead. A certain piece-worker claimed that he had worked with the mute at another mill somewhere else in the state--and the tales he told were unique. The rich thought he was rich and the poor considered him a poor man like themselves. And as there was no way to disprove these rumors they grew marvelous and very real. Each man described the mute as he wished him to be (p. 190).

2. Did Singer have superhuman understanding?	No. He had to struggle to understand the words and ideas. He paid attention to people. He concentrated on what they were saying. If he hadn't, he would have understood nothing. As it was, there was much he did not understand. Read the excerpt which follows outloud.

> He thinks he and I have a secret together but I do not know what it is (p. 182).

3. What harmful effect did this perception of Singer as superhuman have?	It set Singer apart from other people even more. It stressed his differentness. It kept people from perceiving his needs as a human being. No one attempted to know him as a person and find out what he was really like, what his needs were.
4. Singer had many visitors. Why? What did they get out of their visits?	Attention, sympathy, kindness. He didn't judge them. He made no demands of them. He accepted them. They felt free to say whatever they wanted. They left feeling comforted.
5. What did Singer get out of their visits?	They distracted him from his loneliness.
6. Why could they not remove his loneliness?	Because they did not relate to him as a person. It was a one-sided relationship. They idealized him and idolized him, but no one really got to know him. The other reason was that Singer did not really understand them and did not communicate his difficulties in understanding to them. He did not really attempt to make himself known as a person to them. He assumed that he could only really be understood by another deaf person,and therefore didn't try to establish real friendships with hearing people.
7. Why does Singer end his life?	He couldn't live alone, without understanding. He had no faith that he could find someone that he could communicate with, that he could feel understood him.
8. What is the message of the book as it relates to John Singer?	The deaf have the same need for close relationships, communications and understanding as everyone else. When a deaf person cannot fill these needs his life is over.

Supplementary Activities

Reading

1. Greenberg, J. "And Sarah Laughed." In J. Greenberg, Rites of Passage. New York: Avon, 1973. (paper)

   Compare the isolation of Sarah in this story to the isolation of John Singer.

2. Greenberg, J. In This Sign. New York: Avon, 1972. (paper)

   Briefly describe four incidents which highlight the difficulty of communication between the deaf couple in this book and people in the hearing world. Explain why the students at the residential school for the deaf which these two people attended were both fascinated by and afraid of the hearing world.

Composition

1. Rewrite the ending of The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter to make John Singer survive. Choose one of the following outcomes and show how it might have been achieved:

   (a) John Singer survives in loneliness and isolation.
   (b) John Singer finds someone with whom to communicate.
   (c) John Singer is determined to find a way of living fully.

2. Suppose that John Singer had left a suicide note in which he "poured out his heart," elucidating his reasons for ending his life. What would Singer have said in this note? Write it.

Shakespeare, W. The Tragedy of RICHARD THE THIRD.
New York: Pocket Books, 1960. (paper)

(The Folger Library General Reader's Shakespeare,
Edited by L. B. Wright and V. A. LaMar)

NOTE: James J. Green, Associate Professor, Department of English, City College of the City University of New York, contributed suggestions for this lesson.

For the Teacher

A writer reflects the times in which he lives. He mirrors it with a clarity that enables us to perceive commonly held beliefs better than would otherwise have been possible. Shakespeare's plays reflect the period in which he lived with its myths, fears and prejudices.

When Shakespeare describes handicapped characters in his plays he is revealing the way his society viewed handicapped people. What we see reflected is an association between disability and deformity on the one hand and evil, violence, and unhappiness on the other. When Shakespeare wants to foreshadow an unhappy turn of events or highlight some gross error, he often uses a minor character who is physically impaired. (See, for example, the reference to a crippled messenger who arrived too late with an order countermanding Clarence's execution. Act II, Scene 1 of Richard III.) Shakespeare also used disability-related terms to communicate sombre moods and evil events. (See the selection from Henry the Fifth given in the Supplementary Activities section of the lesson plan.)

Richard III is the prime example of the association between outer appearance and inner self made in Elizabethan times and literature. In his opening soliloquy, Richard himself blames his physical deformity for his villainous character. The lesson which follows is designed to supplement the standard study of this drama by making students aware of the mythical nature of this association. It also seeks to make students more aware of the negative myths and prejudices about the disabled which are sprinkled throughout Shakespeare's writings.

Additional Resources for the Teacher

Wright, B. A. Disabling Myths about Disability, 1977. (50¢)
National Easter Seal Society for Crippled Children and Adults
2023 West Ogden Avenue, Chicago, IL 60612.

Wright, B. A. Physical Disability--A Psychological Approach. New York: Harper and Row, 1960.

Lesson Plan

Theme: Views of the physically handicapped in Elizabethan times as reflected in Richard III.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to describe how the play Richard III reflects myths about the handicapped common in Shakespeare's time.
- Students will be more aware of the negative views of the handicapped reflected in Shakespeare's writings.

Introducing the Lesson

Read to the class the part of Richard's first soliloquy which follows.

> But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks
> Nor made to court an amorous looking glass;
> I, that am rudely stamped and want love's majesty
> To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;
> I, that am curtailed of this fair proportion
> Cheated of feature by dissembling Nature,
> Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time
> Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,
> And that so lamely and unfashionable
> That dogs bark at me as I halt by them--
> Why, I, in this weak piping time of peace,
> Have no delight to pass away the time,
> Unless to see my shadow in the sun
> And descant on mine own deformity.
> And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover
> To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
> I am determined to prove a villain...(pp. 1 and 2)

Ask the students: "What does this selection tell us about Richard?" Allow the students to respond until all new ideas are exhausted. List the student responses on the chalkboard as they are given, e.g., Richard feels ugly, deformed, unable to have easy relationships with women. He blames his evilness on his physical deformity and his exclusion from love relationships because of it.

"Let us examine more closely this connection between physical deformity and evil which Shakespeare presents at the beginning of this drama."

Discussion Guide

Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1. Richard III blames his evilness, his villainy on his misshapen body. What do you think of this explanation?	Very few people with physical deformities turn out to be evil or villainous. However, Richard's appearance probably did interfer with his mother's love for him even in childhood. It probably did keep him from seeking love relationships with women in his youth. It, thus, did make him feel unloved and it embittered him.
2. How were people with physical impairments viewed and treated in the period when this drama takes place?	People with physical deformities were viewed as objects of ridicule, as subhuman organisms, as menaces, or objects of dread. In Shakespeare's time it was widely believed that a person's outward appearance was a reflection of his inner self; thus a deformed body reflected a mean soul. People with physical impairments were treated badly. They were used as court jesters or fools to amuse the wealthy. They were sometimes locked up in asylums with the mentally ill and mentally retarded. They were allowed only the lowliest positions and were treated with disdain. It is probable that some were burned as witches, as were the mentally ill and political enemies of powerful people. They were thought unfit for love relationships.
3. How do you think these general beliefs and this general treatment of people with physical disabilities might have affected Richard?	Because of his position Richard was not subject to the harsher forms of treatment accorded to most individuals with physical disabilities, but these beliefs undoubtedly would have affected the way he perceived and felt about himself. Read the passage which follows about how societal expectations affect those with impairments.

> When a person is perceived as deviant, he is cast into a role that carries with it powerful expectancies. Strangely enough, these expectancies not only take hold of the mind of the perceiver, but of the perceived person as well. It is a well-established fact that a person's behavior tends to be profoundly affected by the role expectations that are placed upon him.*

4. Relate this theory to Richard's villainy.	Because of his physical deformity Richard was viewed as subhuman, as a menace or an object of dread. This view, in turn, influenced his self-image, the way he thought of himself. He did not see a path open to him to act and be perceived as a benevolent and beloved leader, a path which was open to his handsome older brother.
5. What images were used in this drama to refer to Richard which reflected a view of him as subhuman?	Many animal images were used. These may be seen as reflecting both his physical and moral deformity. Examples include: "That bottled spider, that foul bunch-backed toad!" (p. 108) "From forth the kennel of thy womb hath crept a hellhound that doth hunt us all to death: That dog... (p. 107) "Thou elvish-marked, abortive, rooting hog!" (p. 26) Another image, which appears to reflect the equating of outward appearance and inner soul, also reflects the subhuman view: "Thou lump of foul deformity" (p. 9)
6. What other experiences might have influenced Richard toward his evil state?	Richard lived in a violent time. Political plots and assasinations were commonplace. Kings often achieved their thrones through violence. Richard's mother appears to have felt little love for him even when he was a child. Her hatred toward him for his murderous villainy is not even tinged with the sorrow one would expect a mother to feel for a son who has gone wrong. Read the passage which follows.

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*Wolfensberger, W. The Principal of Normalization in Human Services. Toronto: National Institute on Mental Retardation, 1972, pp. 15-16.

> Thou camest on earth to make the earth my hell.
> A grievous burden was thy birth to me,
> Tetchy and wayward was thy infancy;
> Thy schooldays frightful, desperate, wild and furious....
> (p. 112)

7. Richard's mother perceived his birth as a "grievous burden." She perceived him even in infancy as irritable and willful. How do you think the Duchess of York acted toward her deformed baby?	Feeling the way she did about his birth, and perceiving him in infancy as she did, and seeing how she felt about him in his manhood, one would hypothesize that Richard's mother had never shown her son love. Apparently Richard the deformed baby, the difficult infant, the furious and frightful school boy, was too much for her to cope with or accept.
8. What could explain Richard's wildness, fury, frightfulness and desperateness in childhood?	Rage at his physical impairment which stigmatized him. Desperateness as a result of not being loved even by his mother.
9. Shakespeare reflected the beliefs of his times, including his society's view of those with disabilities. Do you think that Shakespeare accepted these myths? Do you think he accepted the idea that Richard was a villain because he was physically impaired?	Shakespeare reflected his society's view that outer appearance is a reflection of a person's inner self. Thus Richard is deformed both outwardly and in his soul. But the character in Richard III who explicitly makes this connection is Richard, and anything which Richard says may be a reflection of his evil nature rather than a view the author is supporting. It is Richard who blames his appearance, to justify (rationalize) his evil deeds. It is Richard who blames a crippled messenger for Clarence's death. Moreover, Shakespeare seems to be saying also that Richard is the way he is at least in part because of his mother's lack of love for him.

Concluding Statement: Richard's physical impairment need not have led to an evil nature. His rejecting mother, the violent times in which he lived, the prejudices against the handicapped in those times, all contributed to his character. Many evil men existed during Richard's time and since then. Few of them have been physically disabled.

Supplementary Activities

Writing

1. In Act V, Scene III (p. 139) Richard says: "There is no creature loves me..." Relate this statement to both the development and effects of Richard's evil nature.

2. Below is a passage taken from Shakespeare's play The Comedy of Errors which also makes an association between a deformed exterior and a mean or deformed inner self. Describe how this passage, and others like it, might have affected your feelings about persons with physical disabilities before you participated in this lesson? (Cue: Would you have been aware of the association it made between outer appearance and inner self?) Describe how this passage affects you now, after you have participated in this lesson. (Cue: Is your response different than it would have been before?)

   He is deformed, crooked, old and sere*,
   Ill-fac'd, worse bodied, shapeless everywhere;
   Vicious, ungentle, foolish, blunt, unkind,
   Stigmatical** in making, worse in mind.
   (The Yale Shakespeare, Edited by R. D. French.
   New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926, Act IV,
   Scene II, p. 41).

3. Describe how you might feel if you were a physically impaired person and read passages like the one which follows, that use disability-related terms to get across unpleasant images. Rewrite the passage below without using disability-related terms, while still retaining the image communicated. (This activity may also be implemented through group discussion and writing.)

   Do the low-rated English play at dice,
   And chide the creeple*** tardy-garted night
   Who like a foul and ugly witch doth limp
   So tediously away.
   (The Life of Henry the Fifth. The Yale Shakespeare,
   Edited by R. J. Dorius. New Haven: Yale University
   Press, 1955, Act IV, p. 75).

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* sere: withered
** Stigmatical: branded by deformity
*** creeple: cripple

Williams, T. The Glass Menagerie
New York: New Directions, 1949. (paper)

For the Teacher

Laura, the character around whom The Glass Menagerie revolves, has a physical impairment. Laura sees her physical impairment as a serious handicap. She feels different, like a freak, like the unicorn surrounded by horses. Yet it is not really her physical impairment which makes Laura retreat. It is her perception of her impairment and feelings about it which do. In Laura's mind, in her fragile emotional state, her physical disability is greatly exaggerated. The additional stress which it brought, was too much for her to bear.

Even after Laura's retreat into her glass menagerie, a little support and understanding were enough to encourage her to venture forth again into the real world. With Jim's help, Laura sees that she is like other young women; her brace is not the unicorn's horn; she can even dance. But after years of retreat, Laura is too fragile to be able to sustain this perception without continuous support. When Jim withdraws from the scene, Laura retreats into her make-believe world again.

The point which students may need help in grasping is that Laura's disability is more emotional than physical, that many young people with physical impairments far more severe than Laura's function effectively and are very active in the real world. A disability such as Laura's need not prevent a young person from working or having social and romantic relationships with able-bodied individuals (or other young people with disabilities). Laura's reaction to her physical impairment, her view of herself as crippled, is only one possible adaptation to physical disability. It is a reaction which is likely to characterize an individual who would have had a difficult time coping with life even if she had not had a physical disability.

Additional Resources for the Teacher

When You See in Your School a New Student Who Has a Physical Disability. (single copies free)

Wright, B. A. Disabling Myths about Disability, 1977. (50¢)

National Easter Seal Society for Crippled Children and Adults
2023 West Ogden Avenue, Chicago, IL 60612

Ayroult, E. W. Helping the Handicapped Teenager Mature, 1971. (50¢)

Public Affairs Pamphlets
381 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016

Lesson I

Theme: A physical disability need not keep a person from living a full life.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to provide evidence to support the thesis that Laura's physical impairment is not the major cause of her retreat from reality.

- Students will be able to describe adaptations to physical disability other than the one made by Laura.

Introducing the Lesson

Ask two students to read the dialogue below from page 35, with one playing Amanda and the other Laura.

> Amanda: Girls that aren't cut out for business careers usually wind up married to some nice man....Sister, that's what you'll do!...
> Laura: But, Mother--
> Amanda: Yes?
> Laura...:I'm--crippled!
> Amanda: Nonsense! Laura, I've told you never, never to use that word. Why you're not crippled, you just have a little defect--hardly noticeable, even!

Ask the students: "Is Laura crippled?" Allow them to explore this question until various points of view have been expressed. Then begin the directed examination of this question which follows.

Discussion Guide

	Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1.	Laura thinks of herself as crippled. What does this word crippled imply?	Ask the students to do free association with this word. List the responses on the board.

2. What is it that your responses or associations have in common?	"Crippled" is a term which carries a stigma with it. It connotes someone who is impaired, who cannot do what other people can. It usually also is associated with pity and the assumption that this person cannot live a full life.
3. What kind of a physical impairment did Laura have? How severe was it?	One of Laura's legs was slightly shorter than the other and she wore a brace on it, a condition which fairly often resulted from from polio. It was not a severely disabling condition in a physical sense.
4. If Laura's impairment was relatively mild, why couldn't she go on to lead a full life like many other people with disabilities who work, marry and have children?	To Laura her impairment was something overwhelming. Even if Laura had not had a physical disability she would have had great difficulty coping with reality.
5. To Laura her impairment was overwhelming. It was something which set her apart from her peers. It was a stigma. How did others view her disability?	Have two students read the dialogue from page 93 which follows.

Laura: Yes, it was so hard for me, getting upstairs. I had that brace on my leg--it clumped so loud!
Jim: I never heard any clumping
Laura...: To me it sounded like--thunder!
Jim: Well, well, well, I never even noticed.

	Jim probably did notice. What he was trying to convey by his statement was his perception that Laura's disability was not as important to others as it was to her.
6. What role did Laura's physical impairment actually play in making her the way she was--unable to cope with the world, withdrawn, afraid?	Laura's disability undoubtedly contributed to her difficulties in coping. The physical impairment also gave her something on which to pin her difficulties. However, Laura's physical impairment was undoubtedly not the primary factor in her psychological weakness and retreat.

Have a student read Jim's statement from page 99, which follows.

> You dropped out of school, you gave up an education because of a clump, which as far as I know was practically nonexistent! A little physical defect is what you have. Hardly noticeable even. Magnified thousands of times by imagination!

7. Laura views herself as a crippled person. Is she a crippled person? (In what way?)	Laura is emotionally crippled. She is unable to cope with the demands of the real world--going to school, working, forming and maintaining social relationships.
8. If Laura had been an emotionally healthy child before she became physically impaired, and if her family had been able to accept her disability and help her deal with it, what kind of adaptation might Laura have made to her disability?	Laura would not have allowed her physical impairment to deter her from attempting to make friends. She might have devoted herself to developing some social skills and/or occupational skills. She might have responded to her disability by working harder than most of her peers to prove that she could successfully cope with the demands of the real world.

Supplementary Activities

Reading

Read one of the books below about people with physical impairments. Briefly contrast the adaptation which Laura made to her disability with that of the main character in the book you select.

Eareckson, J. Joni. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1976. (paper)

Joni, a young woman who became a quadraplegic as a result of a diving accident, makes a life for herself by finding God, and through her talent in art. (She paints by holding a brush in her teeth.) Some readers may be bothered by the emphasis on religion in this book, but religion is one way of coming to terms with life as a severely physically disabled person.

Hathaway, L. B. The Little Locksmith. New York: Curtis, 1971. (paper)

This is the poignantly beautiful but sad story of a woman whose richness of mind and soul could not help her gain admission into the world of "normal" people during her youth. She does eventually find love and make a life of her own, in spite of a severe spinal deformity and the prejudice toward physically disabled persons which existed 40 years ago. This book is out of print but available in some libraries.

Killilea, M. With Love From Karen.* New York: Dell, 1964. (paper)

This is a sequel to the book Karen, the story of a young girl with cerebral palsy. While it is somewhat dated, it is full of understanding, love and compassion.

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*Appropriate for pupils with fifth or sixth grade reading levels.

Kirkendall, D., & Warren, M. P. Bottom High to the Crowd. New York: Walker, 1973. .

Don Kirkendall's wheelchair was more of an impediment to others than to him. The early part of this book, which deals with the treatment and effects of polio, is interesting only from a historical point of view, but Kirkendall's insistence on a full and normal life is as current as possible. While the writing in this book is not particularly impressive, the story is.

Valens, E. G. The Other Side of the Mountain. New York: Warner, 1975. (paper)

This book is the story of a champion skier who became a quadraplegic, but made a full life for herself nonetheless. While it is not a particularly good piece of writing, and while parts of the book may become tedious, Jill Kinmont's drive and spirit draw the reader back.

Lesson II

Theme: Relating, in a supportive manner, to young people with disabilities.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to analyze how a disability can provide additional stress during childhood and adolescence.
- Students will be able to describe ways in which peers (and siblings) can relate to individuals with disabilities helpfully.

Introducing the Lesson:

Ask the students to think about times when they felt different from their peers. Have several students describe the situations and their feelings during these experiences. Use the following cues if necessary:

- You came to a party dressed with a different type of clothes than everyone else.
- You played a competitive team game and were the worst player on the team.
- You went to a social event and were not asked to dance for almost the whole evening.
- You said something inappropriate in a group situation and and everyone looked at you after you made that remark.

Conclude with a statement that Laura must have had many feelings like this stemming both from the reality of her physical disability and from her exaggerated perception of its importance.

Discussion Guide

Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1. In the last class session we talked about Laura's problem as being more in her mind than in her body. Today let's look at the stresses that her physical impairment may have caused her as a child and as an adolescent. In what ways might her physical disability have hurt her as a child?	She probably could not engage in some of the physical activities common in childhood as easily or with as much skill as most other children. Running, skipping, playing hopscotch, jumping rope, skating, would all have been much more difficult for Laura.
2. How do you think Amanda contributed to this problem?	Amanda's denial of her daughter's disability would probably have meant that Laura had no one to talk to about her disability, i.e., about why she couldn't do some things as easily or well as other children, about why her leg was impaired. It probably meant that Laura had no one to encourage her to participate in physical games and activities, doing the best she could.
3. In what ways might Laura's physical disability have presented her with additional stresses as an adolescent?	Adolescents are particularly sensitive about the way they look. They also are very conscious of how their peers look and don't want to look very different. Laura's physical disability, while not nearly as distinguishing a characteristic as she perceived it, was nonetheless something which did make her different from her peers, and which probably did make her somewhat less attractive in the eyes of many others. While Laura's disability need not have kept her from dancing, which is an important social activity during adolescence, it would have made her less adept at this activity. It did also cause her to come into her classes later than the other students.
4. Tennessee Williams did not believe that Laura's disability need have resulted in her inability to cope with the real world. How did he demonstrate this?	By showing us how Laura blossomed when given understanding and encouragement by Jim. She shared her thoughts and feelings with him. She let him into her fantasy world. She joked with him. She told him that the unicorn, with whom she identified, would like a change of scenery. She danced with Jim even though she had never danced before.

5. Jim tells Laura that he wishes she had been his sister so that he could have helped her develop self-confidence. What kind of things would Jim have communicated to Laura to make her feel self-confident?	(p. 105) Differentness is nothing to be ashamed of. It can make you special in a nice kind of way. (p. 94) People are not so rejecting. You should reach out and attempt to make contact. (p. 94) Everyone has some kind of short-coming. You shouldn't magnify yours and think that you are the only one who has a problem. (p. 99) Discover what your interest and abilities are and develop them. Everyone has something she can be good at.
6. What actions might Jim have taken if he had been Laura's brother to have helped her become more self-confident?	He might have taught her how to dance, showed her that she could do it. He might have helped her deal with people by serving as a model for how to interact. This would have meant sometimes including Laura in social activities in which he participated. He might have taught her specific social skills, like what to say to a boy you have just met, or how to invite someone to do something with you. (Tom loved his sister but couldn't help her in these ways because he was himself functioning marginally, escaping often into the world of movies and writing.)
7. Suppose a person like Laura were your classmate, a person who had a mild disability but a great fearfulness and sense of inferiority. What could you do to make this person feel more at ease, more accepted, less different?	Acknowledge her. Let her know you recognize her as a peer and as a member of the group. Encourage her. Congratulate her when she does something well. Tell her when you think she looks particularly attractive. Share your notes with her after she has been absent.

If you like her, or think you might, invite her to do things with you, e.g., ask her if you could save a seat for her in the lunchroom.

Don't be afraid to refer to her disability when it is relevant to do so.

Concluding Statement: Laura need not have felt like a cripple because she had a physical impairment. Laura was a cripple because she was not helped to develop the strength to cope with the demands and stresses of everyday life. Even without a physical impairment, Laura would probably have been crippled.

Supplementary Activities

Writing

When we meet Laura in the play The Glass Menagerie she is almost 24 years old and has retreated into a world of make-believe. Suppose that this play had taken place when Laura was fourteen or fifteen and had been attending high school for a few months. Laura's mother has just discovered that Laura has not been at school for over two weeks. Write the dialogue between Laura and her mother which might have ensued, but make Amanda an understanding and supportive mother, one who helps her daughter cope with stressful situations.

Role Playing

Select two or three examples of interesting dialogue produced in the above writing assignment. Have two different students role play (act) each of the interactions. Ask the students to discuss the likely effects of each of the interactions upon Laura's subsequent adjustment to high school.

Gibson, W. The Miracle Worker.
New York: Bantam Books, 1960. (paper)

For the Teacher

Helen Keller was born in 1880. She was a healthy baby until 18 months of age. At that time she was struck by what was diagnosed as a fever of the brain which left her deaf and blind. From then until she was almost seven she moved about her world with little understanding. At age 6½ she was unsocialized, given to temper tantrums, a danger to the children around her, and a disruption to her whole family. This is how Anne Sullivan found her when she arrived at the Keller home to become Helen's governess and teacher.

Ann Sullivan's task was not only to help Helen Keller understand fingerspelling as a method of communication, but also to help Helen's family understand that their pity was harmful to Helen. It was causing them to act in a way that kept Helen unsocialized and unmanageable. The asylum loomed menacingly in Helen's future. The battle between Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan was Anne Sullivan's way of defeating the ghost of the asylum hovering over Helen's future.

In the end, Anne Sullivan won her fight to open Helen's mind because she believed in Helen's intelligence and her drive to learn.

Additional Resources for the Teacher

1. A biography of Helen Keller.
2. Kenney, R. Independent Living Without Sight and Hearing. The Hadley School for the Blind, Department of Services for the Deaf-Blind, 700 Elm Street, Winnetka, IL 60093.

Lesson I

Theme: Helen Keller's drive to learn.

Objectives:

- .Students will be able to explain the source of Helen's frustration and anger.
- .Students will be able to give three examples of Helen's drive to learn.
- .Students will be able to give five examples of Helen's learning accomplishments prior to her meeting with Anne Sullivan.

Introducing the Lesson:

Have four students read the passage below from page 13.

James (Placating): You really ought to put her away, Father.
Kate (Staring Up): What?
James: Some asylum. It's the kindest thing.
Aunt Ev: Why she's your sister, James, not a nobody--
James: Half sister, and half-mentally defective, she can't even keep herself clean. It's not pleasant to see her about all the time.
Kate: Do you dare? Complain of what you can see?
Keller (Very Annoyed): This discussion is at an end! I'll thank you not to broach it again, Ev...I've done as much as I can bear, I can't give my whole life to it. The house is at sixes and sevens from morning till night over that child...

Ask the students: "What can we learn from this passage?" Allow the students to respond until they have mentioned the points which follow: a) Helen is a constant sources of stress and turmoil for the family. b) Helen's mother is very protective of Helen. c) Helen's step-brother thinks she is mentally defective and repulsive. He feels she should be placed in an institution. d) Helen's father is at his wit's end about what to do. Then ask the students: "Was James right? Was placement of

Helen in an asylum the kindest thing that could have been done for her? For her family?" (Cues: "Why not?" "What if the Kellers had not been able to find a teacher who could help Helen?") The point to be elicited is that a great tragedy would have occurred if Helen, with her superior intelligence had been given up as senseless. It would had been tragic for both Helen and for her family. The question becomes much more difficult to answer when one poses the condition that no teacher was found who could help Helen. An unsocialized, frustrated Helen might have been a serious danger to others as she grew older. Moreover, her family would probably not have been able to continue to function under the severe strain of living with her for much longer.

Discussion Guide

	Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1.	We now know that Helen Keller had great potential for learning. Could we have known this if we had met Helen at age six before Anne Sullivan began working with her?	Some people did recognize Helen's potential. Anne Sullivan noted Helen's great curiosity and drive to learn, as well as her excellent memory and ability to imitate. Helen's mother remembered her precocity as an infant and believed that her brightness might still be in her. Helen's Aunt Ev said: "This child has more sense than all these men Kellers, if there's ever any way to reach that mind of hers." (p. 14). On the other hand, most people would probably have thought of Helen as mentally defective, as her half-brother James did, and as her father was inclined to. Helen's unsocialized, uncontrolled behavior made her seem unteachable.
2.	The young Helen Keller often had temper tantrums. Find two incidents which took place before Anne Sullivan's arrival in which Helen went into a tantrum. What was at the root of Helen's rage in both of these incidents?	Two incidents are presented at the beginning of the book which meet these criteria. One involves Helen imitating mouth movements and trying to understand why people move their mouths when together (pp. 8 and 9). The other takes place after Helen upsets her mother by turning over the baby's cradle but is unable to

	understand why her mother is displeased with her (pp. 14-16). Have the students read these two sections silently before answering the question. In both of these incidents the source of Helen's rage is her inability to understand, to answer the questions in her mind about the actions and interactions of people around her.
3. Helen's strong drive to learn often created difficult situations for the people around her. Nonetheless, it was this strong drive to learn that eventually enabled her to master communication. Give examples of Helen's drive to learn.	a) Helen's constant touching of the lips of others and imitation of their mouth movements. b) Helen's exploration of a new person, Anne Sullivan, who comes into her existence (p. 32). c) Helen's examination of the contents of Anne Sullivan's suitcase. d) Helen's exploration of the food on people's plates. Deprived of sight, touch was her way of finding out what other people had to eat. e) Helen's need to find out what Anne Sullivan is doing with Percy's hand even though she doesn't want anything to do with Anne Sullivan.
4. Even without Anne Sullivan's teaching Helen learned many things. Let's find examples of what Helen had learned.	a) She had learned to communicate some ideas through gestures. For example, a cradling motion plus caressing meant a doll (p. 10). A head nod meant "Yes." She stroked her cheek to indicate mother. b) She knew that a doll's face was like a person's face and should have two eyes on it (pp. 11-12). c) She knew that a baby lies in a cradle.

	d) She knew that a key could lock and unlock a suitcase or a door, and she knew how to use a key.
	e) She knew that a shawl is something one wraps around oneself; a hat is something that goes on the head, and glasses are something that is worn in front of the eyes.
	f) She knew the layout of both the house and yard, and even knew where there was a loose board near the well.
5. Helen's step-brother James related her early finger spelling to the imitation of a monkey. Was he correct in assuming it signified nothing? (Why not?)	Helen's fingerspelling of words demonstrated her motivation to learn and an excellent memory. Moreover, imitation is an essential step in most early learning. Imitation is involved in the acquisition of speech and the learning of motor, social and academic skills. Moreover Helen had to be able to imitate and reproduce fingerspelling if she was ever to acquire language. The fact that she was able to do so readily, indicated that Helen was a highly intelligent individual.
6. What stymied or (temporarily) blocked Helen's acquisition of language during this period? What was it that was so difficult to get across to her? (Why?)	While Helen readily reproduced the fingerspelling of words she had no idea that these motions she was making stood for things. This association was extremely difficult to teach because there was no way to explain it, and Helen could not see others making this association in their actions.
7. Why was it so important for Helen to grasp the connection between the finger motions she could reproduce and things or ideas?	Once she understood this connection she would have begun to acquire language. Language is probably the single most important tool we have for thinking, as well as for sharing and relating to others.

Concluding Statement: Read to the class the statement on page 30: "Language is to the mind more than light is to the eye."*

Supplementary Activities

Display

Display a poster of the fingerspelling alphabet for deaf-blind persons. Call the students' attention to it. Discuss how it differs from the sign language used by deaf persons who can see. (Sign language used by persons who can see is composed largely of signs which stand for concepts or words. Most deaf people only use fingerspelling for proper names. The signs used by deaf persons are not produced into the hand. They are largely formed in front of the person's face and upper torso.)

A free poster of "The One-Hand Manual Alphabet" may be obtained from: The American Foundation for the Blind
15 West 16th Street
New York, N. Y. 10011

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*The Dr. Howe to whom Anne Sullivan attributes this statement is Dr. Samuel G. Howe who pioneered the teaching of deaf-blind children.

Lesson II

Theme: Pity as an enemy of the full development of individuals with disabilities.

Objective:

.Students will be able to describe the potentially destructive consequences of pity toward those with disabilities.

Introducing the Lesson:

Read the two passages which follow to the class. Tell the students to think about what the two statements have in common. "How can you discipline an afflicted child? Is it her fault?" (Kate, p. 15) "Why can't you let her be? Have some--pity on her, for being what she is--" (James, p. 82).

Ask the students what feeling or premise both of these quotes reflect. After the pupils have had a chance to respond say: "Throughout this play there are statements made by members of Helen's family expressing pity for her. We are going to examine how these feelings of pity affected Helen."

Discussion Guide

Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1. What are the implications of these two statements about pity made by Kate and James?	If the implications were already discussed, skip to question #2. The implications are that Helen can't be held accountable for her behavior; that her behavior has to be tolerated, no matter how unacceptable, because she can't be taught to behave differently. These statements also imply that nothing can be expected of her; no demands can be made of her; she can't be expected to achieve any higher level of functioning or learning.

2. What were the outcomes of this overwhelming pity which Helen's family felt for her?

At age 6½ Helen was unsocialized; had temper tantrums whenever she couldn't get her way; could only be "controlled" by being distracted with sweets. She was a danger to other children. She kept the household in a constant state of turmoil.

3. Helen's family pitied her. Anne Sullivan did not. Why not?

Anne Sullivan felt that pity was destructive, that it was standing in the way of Helen's development. Read the quote which follows:

> Annie: All of you here are so sorry for her you've kept her--like a pet, why, even a dog you housebreak (p. 75).

Select three students to read the dialogue which follows from pp. 56-57.

> Keller (Very Annoyed): Miss Sullivan! You would have more understanding of your pupil if you had some pity in you. Now kindly do as I--
> Annie: Pity?...For this tyrant? The whole house turns on her whims, is there anything she wants she doesn't get? I'll tell you what I pity, that the sun won't rise and set for her all her life, and everyday you're telling her it will, what good will your pity do her when you're under the strawberries, Captain Keller?
> Keller (Outraged): Kate, for the love of heaven will you--
> Kate: Miss Annie, please, I don't think it serves to lose our--
> Annie: It does you good, that's all. It's less trouble to feel sorry for her than to teach her anything better, isn't it?

4. What feelings did Anne Sullivan have toward the Helen she was trying to help?

Respect and admiration for Helen's intelligence and spirit.

Read the examples below which illustrate this respect.

Annie: Ho, there's nothing impaired in that head, it works like a mousetrap! (p. 51)

Annie: I'm not counting on force, I'm counting on her. That little imp is dying to know.
James: Know what?
Annie: Anything. Any and every crumb in God's creation. I'll have to use that appetite too (p. 82).

5. Anne Sullivan fought to control Helen's behavior. Why did she think this was so important?	Anne Sullivan believed that Helen had to learn to behave in a socially acceptable manner or she would not be able to live in society. Helen's family had already begun thinking about placing her in an institution before Anne Sullivan arrived, because they could not tolerate Helen's unsocialized behavior much longer. Anne Sullivan also believed that Helen's behavior had to be controlled if Helen was ever to learn to use her mind. Miss Sullivan viewed obedience as the first step in the establishment of a teaching-learning relationship.
6. When Anne Sullivan did succeed in getting Helen to act obediently, was she satisfied? (Why not?)	No. She felt that obedience was a first step, but that's all. Unless it paved the way for opening up Helen's mind, it meant nothing. Have two students read the dialogue which follows from p. 107.

Annie: What have I done?
Keller: Taken a wild thing and given us back a child.
Annie (Presently): I taught her one thing, no. Don't do this—don't do that—
Keller: It's more than all of us could, in all the years we--
Annie: I wanted to teach her what language is. I wanted to teach her yes.
Keller: You will have time.
Annie: I don't know, how. I know without it to do nothing but obey is—no gift, obedience without understanding is a--blindness, too.

7. When Helen does come to understand that the finger imitation games she has been playing with Anne Sullivan have meaning --that each set of finger motions stands for a thing or an idea—how does this change her life? What does it mean she can now go on to do?	She can "talk" and "listen." She can share her thoughts and ideas with others; they can share theirs with her. She can ask questions and learn the answers to them. She can find out all about the world. Close the discussion by having a student read Anne Sullivan's statement of what she wanted Helen to be able to know.

> "I wanted to teach you--oh, everything, the earth is full of Helen, everything on it that's ours for a wink and it's gone, and what we are on it, the—light we bring to it and leave behind in--words, why, you can see five thousand years back in a light of words, everything we feel, think, know—and share, in words, so not a soul is in darkness, or done with, even in the grave " (pp. 103-104).

POEMS ABOUT BLINDNESS

1. Morris, M. "Having Eyes that See." In A. Salkey (Ed.), Breaklight: The Poems of the Carribean. New York: Doubleday, 1972.
2. Levertov, D. "A Solitude." In S. Dunning (Ed.), Some Haystacks Don't Even Have Any Needles: And Other Complete Modern Verse Poems. New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepherd, 1969.
3. Blades, L. B. "Out of Blindness." In S. Dunning (Ed.), Some Haystacks Don't Even Have Any Needles: And Other Complete Modern Verse Poems. New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepherd, 1969.
4. *Berry, W. "A Music." In H. Carrath (Ed.), The Voice That Is Great Within Us. New York: Bantam, 1970.
5. *Milton, J. "On His Blindness." (May be found in many anthologies.)

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*Supplementary poems.

For the Teacher

Three poems are included in the basic lesson which follows. Two additional poems are listed under supplementary activities. The first two poems "Having Eyes That See" and "A Solitude" deal primarily with the feelings of a sighted person toward blind people. In "Having Eyes That See" the poet expresses feelings of guilt discomfort and pain, along with compassion. The author of the second poem expresses a desire to reach out to a blind person and make contact with him. These two poems encompass the mixture of positive and negative feelings which many people feel toward the blind. In the third poem the author attempts to express a small piece of how a blind person experiences the world, i.e., the richness of the blind person's auditory and tactile experiences.

All three of these poems contain stereotypes and misconceptions of blindness and blind people, as do the two poems listed under supplementary activities. A blind beggar is pictured in the opening of "Having Eyes That See." A blind man is pictured as mysteriously different, without goals and isolated in the poem "A Solitude." Blind people are described as feeling that standard speech is alien to them in "Out of Blindness." In "A Music" we are faced with a blind street musician. "In "On His Blindness" Milton struggles with feelings of uselessness.

Some of these apparent misconceptions may reflect poetic license. A poet does not have to write about what is most common or standard. Beggars and street musicians may make up only a tiny fraction of the blind population, but poets have every right to focus on them. The danger of this, however, is that the notion of blind persons as beggars might eclipse the fact that most blind persons lead useful and self-sufficient lives. We owe it to students to make them aware of the rest of the picture.

Milton, newly blind, was struggling with the misconception that loss of sight means inability to be productive. The existence of his poem is an immediate contradiction of that misconception. Many people who have recently lost their sight feel as Milton did, which is one reason why his poem is still read today. Most of those newly blind persons (except for those of very advanced age), find it possible to continue to lead independent existences, to work and to live fully. The blind people who are not the subject of these poems are lawyers, computer programmers, factory workers, teachers, etc.

Additional Information on Blindness

1. American Foundation for the Blind
   15 West 16th Street, New York, NY 10011

   (single copies free)

   Dickman, I. R. Living with Blindness. (pamphlet)

   Facts About Blindness. (pamphlet)

2. Biographies

   Krents, H. To Race The Wind. New York: Bantam, 1972. (paper)

   This excellent autobiography of a young blind man was made into a television program. Harold Krents is the person who served as an inspiration for the play/film Butterflies Are Free.

   Sullivan, T. & Gill, D. If You Could See What I Hear. New York: New American Library, 1976. (paper)

   Tom Sullivan is a bright, talented person who sometimes appears on television shows where he sings and plays his own musical compositions. This is the story of his childhood, his years at Harvard University, and his experience as a husband and father.

Lesson Plan

Theme: How we feel about blindness.
Stereotypes of the blind.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to describe their feelings toward blind persons.
- Students will be able to explain the reactions toward blind persons expressed in the poems studied.
- Students will be able to identify misconceptions reflected in the poems.

Introducing the Lesson

Read the poem "Having Eyes That See"* by Mervyn Morris out loud to the class.

I. Discussion Guide: "Having Eyes That See"

Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1. What is this poem about?	Students may say blindness.
2. The general topic is blindness, but what is the author really examining?	His own feelings toward blindness and blind people.
	Distribute copies of the poem to the students.

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*In A. Salkey (Ed.) Breaklight: The Poems of the Carribean. New York: Doubleday, 1972.

3. Find the phrases that describe the author's feelings about blindness.	Write the phrases on the chalkboard: "breeds like a chigoe in my mind" "assault me for my eyes" "brief passion" "rough compassion" "spurious guilt" "self-accusing" "feelings prick" "shadowed vague connection" Help the students with the definition of chigoe (a sand flea that burrows into the skin causing painful sores) and spurious.
4. What do all these phrases add up to? How could the poet's feelings toward blind persons be characterized (described, summarized)?	Guilt predominates. While he feels compassion, most of his feelings are painful, uneasy ones.
5. If a person has these kinds of feelings, how is he likely to act toward blind people?	He will generally keep his distance. He may well help a blind person who needs assistance with a particular task, but the guilt and uneasiness which he feels may keep him from establishing social contact or close relationships with blind persons.
6. Are such feelings common?	These feelings are quite common.
7. Let's turn to ourselves now. Think about your own feelings when you saw or read about blindness or blind persons. What did it mean to you? How did you feel?*	If the students hesitate, ask them not to censor their thoughts, but just voice whatever associations they have. Write their responses on the board. If these students represent the broad population they will come up with answers like: (a) Meaning--misery, tragedy, helplessness, uselessness, special powers (of understanding, of goodness). (b) Feelings--pity, uneasiness, fear.

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*If there is a blind student in the classroom you may want to ask this question in the past, i.e., what were your feelings before you met (student's name)?

8. Why do people feel this way about blindness?	Give the students an opportunity to express various ideas.
9. People feel uneasy about others who are different from what they are used to and expect. Blindness is experienced as threatening by many people. They read into it something which most persons who are blind do not feel. People project on to blindness their own fears of loss of power, control, identity and consciousness. The occasional blind beggar or dependent elderly blind person they see feed this misconception of blind persons as helpless and pitiful.	
10. Are most blind people helpless, and dependent on begging for their support?	No. Only a small proportion of blind persons beg for their support. Most blind persons lead useful and self-sufficient lives. Some of the discomfort and guilt people feel in the presence of a blind person is based on misconceptions of blindness.
11. Let's look at how another poet feels about seeing a blind person.	

II. Discussion Guide: "A Solitude"* by Denise Levertov

Distribute copies of this poem to the students and have them read it silently. You may choose to read it aloud as well, or have a student read it aloud.

1. What feelings are expressed in this poem that were not in "Having Eyes That See?"	Interest/curiosity. The author wants to understand what it is like to be blind, and tries to figure out what the blind man is feeling and thinking.

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*In S. Dunning (Ed.). Some Haystacks Don't Even Have Any Needles: And Other Complete Modern Verse Poems. New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepherd, 1969.

	If the poem has not been read aloud, read the lines below: "O, strange joy, To gaze my fill at a stranger's face, No, my thirst is greater than before"
2. In what way does her interest cause her to behave?	She tries to make contact with the blind man, to get closer to him.
3. This poet is guessing about the experience of blindness. What are some of the guesses or interpretations she makes?	(Write the responses on the chalk board.) (a) "He is in a great solitude" (b) "He doesn't care that he looks strange" (c) "He doesn't know what *look* is. I see he has never seen." (d) His quiet is different from the quiet of others. (e) He is indifferent to offers of help. (f) He remains separate and alone. (g) He is going nowhere. (h) He is affirming his existence and identity. Ask students to identify and read aloud the passages which make points c-h.
4. The poet misinterprets some of what she sees because of the misconceptions she brings to the situation. Can you identify any of these misinterpretations?	Review each of the guesses in #3 with the students. (a) Solitude means aloneness and loneliness. There is no reason to believe that this blind person is terribly alone and lonely, as the poet implies. Most blind people have friends and families, although it is true that many sighted people steer clear of close relationships with blind persons. (b) Blind people generally care quite a lot about how they look. They want to look attractive. If he looks strange it is because he doesn't know he does, or because he doesn't know how to make himself look less strange. (c) This blind man may have been able to see at one time in his life. If he had, he would know what "look" is. It is rare that someone who is not a specialist in blindness can tell just by a few minutes of observation whether a blind person has ever been able to see. Sometimes this is impossible to determine without asking the person. (d) The quiet of the blind man, "a tumult of images," is probably very similar to the quiet of some of the other people on the train who are lost in their own thoughts.

	(e) The blind man may have been indifferent to the help offered because he didn't need help in finding the exit.
	(f) How often does anyone really share his thoughts with a stranger who offers help in getting someplace. In this situation most people would remain reserved. The poet feels this as a quality of the blind because she is reaching out to this blind man in her attempt to learn.
	(g) This is a reflection of the stereotype of blind persons as useless, as not being able to accomplish any thing. Many blind people "go places," in the sense of working, accomplishing and moving toward goals. Some blind people go nowhere, just as some sighted people go nowhere.
	(h) The poet recognizes that the blind person does have a sense of who he is, of identity.
5. There is a physical interaction in this poem which rings false (which would probably not have happened as it was described). What is it?	The author makes much of hand holding with the blind man. However, this is not the standard or safest way for a blind person to be guided. It is most important for the sighted person to serve as leader in this situation. The standard technique for achieving this is for the blind person to place his hand on the sighted person's arm just above the elbow.
6. Why then did the poet make so much of this hand holding?	Either the poet was unaware of how blind persons are guided, or she was exercising poetic license to make a point.
7. Summarize what the poet communicated with this poem.	The poet is reaching out. She wants to make contact. She wants to understand. Her ability to understand is hindered by the stereotypes and misconceptions she has.

III. Discussion Guide: "Out of Blindness"* by Leslie B. Blades

Read the poem, "Out of Blindness" out loud, after asking the students to close their eyes as you do so.

1. What is this poem about? What is the poet trying to communicate?	The poet is attempting to get at one aspect of how the world is experienced by a blind person, specifically that the world is experienced through sound and touch.
2. Let's take a closer look at some of the words and sensory images the poet substitutes for standard words. What words does the author use to describe the sound of an airplane?	"abrupt tumultuous thrum of gasoline explosion"
3. How does the author suggest that a blind person experiences an airplane?	As "noise obliterating bird-song"
4. What do you think of the poet's words and images?	The author's words and images are powerful and full of affect.
5. Do you think this is the way a blind person experiences an airplane?	While blind people do have auditory and kinesthetic images of objects and events, it is doubtful that they experience the kinds of images the poet suggests on an everyday basis. They may experience the "abrupt tumultuous thrum of a gasoline explosion," but they are likely to respond by thinking "airplane" rather than "noise obliterating bird-song," unless they are in the special kind of mood that might make anyone think in terms of affective images.
6. Did you ever find yourself thinking of objects or events in terms of images like the author's? Under what conditions?	Many sighted people, when relaxed and experiencing a particularly beautiful or moving situation, will have sensory images in the vein of the author's. Such images might be stimulated by a vacation trip into the country, by a walk through new snow or fallen leaves, by the experiences of the first beautiful day in spring, etc.

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*In S. Dunning (Ed.). Some Haystacks Don't Even Have Any Needles: And Other Complete Modern Verse Poems. New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepherd, 1969.

7. The poet states that standard words are alien to the blind person because he has to link words to sounds and touch. Do you agree that standard words are alien to the blind?	This is a misconception. It is not the way blind people feel about language. The process the author describes, of linking words to sounds and touch, is the way that sighted people learn language too, except that vision plays a major role in this process for sighted people. Names of objects are not intrinsically connected to the way objects look, anymore than they are to the way objects sound or feel. Sighted people learn to connect an object's name with the way it looks, sounds, smells, tastes and feels. Blind people engage in the same process, but with information from four senses instead of five.
8. If the idea of standard language being alien to blind people, of being only a game they play with sighted persons, is false, then why read this poem?	Poems are not read for their factual content. They are read because they help us feel something or perceive something we would not otherwise feel or perceive. In the sense that this poem makes us more sensitive to the beauty of auditory and tactile ways of experiencing events, and makes us more aware of the importance of such ways of experiencing events, it has made a contribution. We should, however, be alert to the misconceptions reflected in poems, and in other pieces of literature.

Supplementary Activities

Writing

1. Think of all the times you have seen or interacted with a blind person. Write a poem about one such contact. Focus either on your own feelings in the situation or on how you think the blind person felt.

2. Think of a particular situation in which you would be relaxed and happy. Imagine yourself as not using your vision in that situation. Write a poem to express how you might experience the situation without vision.

Reading

1. Read the poem "A Music" by Wendell Berry, from W. Berry. Opening. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968)

This poem is about a blind musician who plays for contributions. Ask the students the following questions:

1.1 Is this the same thing as begging?

1.2 Do you feel any differently if the musician playing for music in the street is blind or sighted? (Do you make a contribution when he is blind that you wouldn't have made if he were sighted? Why?)

1.3 Is music the only area open to blind persons who don't want to beg or live off government allotments? (What other fields of work are open to blind persons?)

2. (For honor students or classes.) Read the poem "On His Blindness" by John Milton. This poem may be found in many anthologies, including: Kincheloe, I. M. & Cook, L. H. Adventures in Values. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1969.

Tell the students that this poem was written by Milton shortly after he became blind, at the age of 44. Ask:

2.1 What phrases reveal the way Milton felt about becoming blind? How did it affect his image of himself?

2.2 What words does Milton use to express blindness?

2.3 How does the fact that Milton wrote this poem contradict the content of the poem? (Is Milton just standing and waiting?)

2.4 Why is this poem still being read more than 300 years after it was written?

2.5 What is meant by the line: "Who best Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best."?

2.6 What is meant by the line "They also serve who only stand and wait."?

3. (For extra credit or honors projects.) Read one of the biographies listed below.

Krents, H. To Race the Wind. New York: Bantam, 1972. (paper)

Sullivan, T. & Gill, D. If You Could See What I Hear. New York: New American Library, 1976. (paper)

Compare the main character in either of the biographies above to the conceptualizations of the blind expressed in the poems in this lesson.

HAVING EYES THAT SEE

Mervyn Morris

That blind man, at the bus-stop, regularly,
feeling his way along the window's-edge,
turning his palms up, saying, 'Thanks.
God bless you, Ma'am!' and moving on,
until the bus must roar again
and leave him fingering the change
the weary housewife handed him,
breeds like a chigoe in my mind.
And even in a casual magazine,
advertisements assault me for my eyes,
invoke brief passion with their anecdote
of blind girls asking (was this true?),
'Tell me, what colour is the wind?'

The rough compassion, filed away,
returns insisting, now and then,
darkly refusing to be kept unseen,
nagging for close review.

What must I do? Not let the spurious
guilt take charge and lead me groping
to some black idiocy of self-accusing
for having eyes that see. But feelings
prick like Braille and spell
some shadowed vague connection.

"Having Eyes that See" by Mervin Morris from Breaklight, an anthology of Caribbean poetry chosen, edited and introduced by Andrew Salkey, first published by Hamish, Hamilton, London. © Mervin Morris.

A SOLITUDE

Denise Levertov

A blind man. I can stare at him
ashamed, shameless. Or does he know it?
No, he is in a great solitude.

O, strange joy,
to gaze my fill at a stranger's face.
No, my thirst is greater than before.

In his world he is speaking
almost aloud. His lips move.
Anxiety plays about them. And now joy

of some sort trembles into a smile.
A breeze I can't feel
crosses that face as if it crossed water.

The train moves uptown, pulls in and
pulls out of the local stops. Within its loud
jarring movement a quiet,

the quiet of people not speaking,
some of them eyeing the blind man,
only a moment though, not thirsty like me,

and within that quiet his
different quiet, not quiet at all, a tumult
of images, but what are his images,

he is blind? He doesn't care
that he looks strange, showing
his thoughts on his face like designs of light

flickering on water, for he doesn't know
what *look* is.
I see he has never seen.

And now he rises, he stands at the door ready,
knowing his station is next. Was he counting?
No, that was not his need.

When he gets out I get out.
'Can I help you towards the exit?'
'Oh, alright.' An indifference.

But instantly, even as he speaks,
even as I hear indifference, his hand
goes out, waiting for me to take it,

and now we hold hands like children.
His hand is warm and not sweaty,
the grip firm, it feels good.

And when we have passed through the turnstile,
he going first, his hand at once
waits for mine again.

'Here are the steps. And here we turn
to the right. More stairs now.' We go
up into sunlight. He feels that,

the soft air. 'A nice day,
isn't it?' says the blind man. Solitude
walks with me, walks

beside me, he is not with me, he continues
his thoughts alone. But his hand and mine
know one another,

it's as if my hand were gone forth
on its own journey. I see him
across the street, the blind man,

and now he says he can find his way. He knows
where he is going, it is nowhere, it is filled
with presences. He says, *I am.*

"A Solitude". The Jacob's Ladder
© 1961 by Denise Levertov Goodman, reprinted by permission of
New Direction, New York.

OUT OF BLINDNESS

Leslie B. Blades

Give names to sounds,
if it so please you:
call the abrupt tumultuous thrum
of gasoline explosion--"airplane."
But it is not.
It is noise obliterating bird-song.

Call wind among invisible leaves,
"rustling whisper of the trees."
But it is not.
It is an oval defined by silence,
wherein a multitude
of faint staccato clicks
sound magically.

Say--if you like--the weightless warm
against my cheek is sunlight,
and the cool my cheek feels
(penetrating yet leaving undisturbed
the film of warmth) is wind.
I will agree and we will play our game.
But do not ask me to believe
That name and feel are quite the same.

Your language of the sight is current coin
for our transaction, I agree.
But in my real
not seen things count
but sound and what I feel.
I link these, each to each
within the brain until--
though alien to your world--
my tongue can speak your speech to a degree
that buys me privilege of your company.

Reprinted from ETC, xvii (#2) 1960 with
permission of the International Society
for General Semantics.

A MUSIC

Wendell Berry

I employ the blind mandolin player
in the tunnel of the Métro. I pay him
a coin as hard as his notes,
and maybe he has employed me, and pays me
with his playing to hear him play.

Maybe we're necessary to each other,
and this vacant place has need of us both
--it's vacant, I mean, of dwellers,
is populated by passages and absences.

By some fate or knack he has chosen
to place his music in this cavity
where there's nothing to look at
and blindness costs him nothing.
Nothing was here before he came.

His music goes out among the sounds
of footsteps passing. The tunnel is the resonance
and meaning of what he plays.
It's his music, not the place, I go by.

In this light which is just a fact, like darkness
or the edge or end of what you may be
going toward, he turns his cap up on his knees
and leaves it there to ask and wait, and holds up
his mandolin, the lantern of his world;

his fingers make their pattern on the wires.
This is not the pursuing rhythm
of a blind cane pecking in the sun,
but is a singing in a dark place.

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ON HIS BLINDNESS

John Milton

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest He returning chide;
"Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?"
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts. Who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait."

2. half my days: Milton became blind at the age of forty-four.
8. fondly: foolishly.

POEMS ABOUT DEAFNESS

"You Have To Be Deaf To Understand"*

"Mutterings Over The Crib Of A Deaf Child"
Wright, J. Collected Poems. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University, 1971.

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*May be ordered from Gallaudet College Bookstore, Gallaudet College, Washington, DC 20002.
(#0717--75¢ plus 75¢ for postage and handling.)

For the Teacher

Deafness is in some ways a profound disability. It robs the deaf child of the opportunity to communicate the way most other people do. Unless the deaf child is born to deaf parents who use sign language, the child will probably pass through his early years without an adequate means of expression for his needs, ideas and questions. Moreover, his deafness will cut him off from a whole wealth of interactions with his hearing parents and other family members.

Speech is something which hearing children acquire naturally. It is something which a deaf child must struggle to acquire, even with excellent instruction. Understanding the speech of others remains a struggle for deaf people throughout their lives. Even the best speech reader (lip reader) understands only a fraction of what is said in most situations. The strain of trying to understand, the embarrassment of misunderstanding, and the impatience or discomfort of those who are misunderstood, are the hurts which Willard J. Madsen is expressing in this poem. Madsen is also making a plea for understanding of the role which manual communication plays in the lives of some deaf persons.

The question of whether deaf children should be taught manual communication has divided the field of deaf education for years. For a long time deaf children were prohibited from using manual communication because it was felt that it made the acquisition of speech more problematic. Today most deaf educators accept the idea that manual communication is essential for some deaf individuals. However, disagreements still exist about when and for whom it should be sanctioned.

"Mutterings Over The Crib of a Deaf Child" is an expression of both concern and optimisim about how a deaf child will be able to function. It is an inner dialogue in which problems are presented and solutions identified. It is about (parental) love for a baby with a disability.

Information on Deafness

Pamphlet

Hearing Loss: Hope Through Research. Bethesda: National Institute Of Health, 1977.

(Single copies may be obtained free by writing to: Office of Scientific and Health Reports, NICDS, National Institute of Health, Bethesda, MD 20014)

Biography

Spradley, T. S. & Spradley, J. P. Deaf Like Me. New York: Random House, 1978.

This is a beautiful story of parents striving to find the best way to help their deaf child understand the world and communicate with the people in her life.

Lesson Plan

Theme: What it is like to be deaf in a hearing world.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to describe some of the problems in communication which a deaf individual experiences in a hearing world.
- Students will be able to describe some of the concerns of parents about their baby who is deaf.

Introducing the Lesson

Tell the students that they are going to read a poem which begins with the line, "What is it like to 'hear' a hand?" Write the line on the chalkboard. Ask them if they can imagine (guess, figure out) what is meant by "hear" a hand? Some of the pupils may allude to hearing noises that can be produced with the hand, e.g., finger snapping, clapping, hitting. Respond by saying that the poet was not referring to the sounds that the hand makes. What else might he mean? If the students don't make reference to using hands to communicate as in manual communication, read the next line to the class. Ask the pupils if that gave anyone a different idea of what the poet meant by "hearing" a hand. If none of the pupils gives a correct response, hand out copies of the poem "You Have to be Deaf to Understand" while telling the pupils that the answer is in the poem. Have the pupils read the poem silently to themselves. If the pupils figure out the correct answer, affirm that response and tell the class to read the poem to find out more about this subject.

Discussion Guide: "You Have to be Deaf to Understand"

(If students have figured out the meaning of the first stanza, begin with question #3.)

Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1. Now that you have read the whole poem how many of you understand what the poet meant by the first line?	The poet was referring to the use of the hand in manual communication, i.e., sign language and finger spelling. What he meant by the first line is that the hand is the instrument for communication for some deaf people. They see words as the hand expresses them, the way other people hear words.
2. What did he mean?	
3. What is the theme of this poem? (What is the author [poet] telling us in this poem?)	The author is describing the difficulties in communication which a deaf person has in a hearing world.
4. Let's examine these difficulties. What kind of difficulty is being described in the second stanza?	The difficulty a young deaf child has in understanding what a teacher says.
5. What is the third stanza referring to? What is the problem?	Learning to speak.
6. Why is this a problem for a deaf child?	Because we need to hear words to know how to produce the right sound.
7. How was the teacher trying to teach the deaf child to speak?	The teacher was using her hands to shape the child's mouth correctly for the sound to be produced.
8. What is meant by "mumbo-jumbo?"	"Mumbo-jumbo" means senseless and confusing. The deaf child could not understand the meaning or use of what the teacher was doing. The deaf child did not know that what he was being asked to do with his mouth and throat would give him a way of expressing his needs and ideas.

9. In the next stanza why did the brother or sister or friend not tell the deaf child what he wanted to know? Why did they say, "Never mind!"?	Because it was hard to explain something to the deaf child through speech. He probably could only understand part of what was being said. It probably would take a lot of time and patience to help him understand. Because hearing people are so used to communicating easily, his brother or sister or friend might not have been willing to work at helping him understand.
10. In the fifth stanza the deaf child is being punished. Why?	For communicating to another deaf child with his hands. In some schools for the deaf, children were punished for using sign language because it was thought that the use of sign language would interfere with the learning of speech.
11. What problems does the author refer to in the next stanza?	Being shouted at by people who mistakenly think this will enable the deaf person to hear. Being unable to grasp the point of a joke because he can't understand the words.
12. In the next stanza (#7) what is meant by "the words were misread?"	The author is referring to speech reading (lip reading), the process of figuring out what is being said by watching the movements of the mouth, as well as facial expressions, and by using context clues.
13. Why is a deaf person who speech reads (lip reads) likely to misunderstand some of what is being said?	There are many sounds that involve the same lip movements. It is impossible to distinguish them from one another by watching mouth movements alone. Examples: t, d, n; p, b, m.
14. What source of stress is alluded to in the eighth stanza?	Not being able to have a telephone conversation independently.
15. What new problem is referred to in the next stanza?	Feelings of being alone, lonely and isolated in the company of hearing persons.

16. What situation is difficult in the tenth stanza?	Entering situations where you will have to communicate with people you don't know.
17. How is the next stanza different from the others?	The tone is different. It expresses belongingness and pleasure, while the others express tension, aloneness, and stress. It is about understanding rather than misunderstanding, about a form of communication the person feels comfortable with rather than one with which he feels uncomfortable and inadequate.
18. The poet says "You have to be deaf to understand." Then why did he write this poem? Is he saying that only deaf people will understand it? Was it meant only for deaf people?	No. What he means is that deaf persons will instantly understand what is being expressed. They will recognize the struggle to acquire speech, the feelings of aloneness, of inadequacy, the fears and hurts as their own. Hearing people will have to work to understand these experiences, and will probably never feel them with the same impact as a deaf person who has lived through them.
19. Then why should hearing people bother to read this poem?	(a) For the same reason that we read any poem--to gain new insights into people and events, to enrich our understanding of how people feel and perceive things. (b) Because if we understand how deaf people feel we may modify the way we act so as to make it a little easier, a little less stressful and lonely for deaf people to live in a hearing world.

Discussion Guide: "Mutterings Over the Crib of a Deaf Child"

	Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1.	We have just discussed what it means to be deaf. Now we are going to turn to a poem which expresses some of the concerns of parents for a deaf baby.	Have the students read the poem "Mutterings Over the Crib of a Deaf Child."
2.	Why did the poet, James Wright, place quotation marks around every other stanza? (What is the relationship between the stanzas with quotation marks and the stanzas not in quotation marks?)	This is a dialogue, most likely an inner dialogue which someone very close to the deaf baby is having with himself. The stanzas in quotation marks ask questions which reflect concern about how the deaf child will be able to function. The alternate paragraphs present reassuring answers to the problems raised.
3.	Who might the person be who is having this inner dialogue?	Someone who loves the child very much, perhaps his father, or a grandparent. (The "speaker" refers to the mother as if she were someone else.)
4.	What concerns are raised in this poem?	Stanza 1: How will the deaf child know when school begins or ends if he can't hear the school bell? Stanza 3: How will the deaf child know when to get up in the morning if he doesn't hear the morning sounds? Stanza 5: How will the "speaker" (the father?) be able to deal with his deaf child being hurt or missing out on some of nature's beauty and meaning?
5.	What kind of answers are offered to calm the concerns of the "speaker"?	The answers point out other ways of dealing with everyday needs, particularly the ability to learn through the senses of vision and touch. The "speaker" will learn to accept the fact that his child will feel pain, and will miss out on some experiences or clues from nature. He will provide his child with the same kind of loving that he would give to a child who could hear.

6. What tone does this poem communicate? What kind of feeling are you left with after you have finished reading it?	It is a tone of calmness and gentle optimism. The poem communicates a feeling of love and acceptance. It leaves one with a reassured feeling, as if this parent will manage well, and this baby will be helped to live a good life.

Supplementary Activities

Writing

1. Think about the role that the telephone plays in your life. Keep a list of why and how you used the telephone during a two-or three-day period. Describe how your life would be affected if you could not communicate by telephone.

2. Try an experiement with a friend. For one hour, have your friend "talk" to you by mouthing words rather than saying them out loud. Write a poem to express how you felt.

Reading (For honors students)

Wright, D. Deafness. New York: Stein and Day, 1975. (paper)

This is the autobiography of an author who has been deaf since the age of seven. It is a beautifully written, poetic account of the experience of deafness.

Demonstration

If there is a program for hearing impaired pupils in the school ask the teacher of this program whether she, or any of the pupils in the program, could teach the signs for some common objects and actions to your class. If there is no program for hearing impaired students in the school, find out whether any of the hearing pupils in your school, or their parents, can use sign language and would be willing to demonstrate some signs. (Family members of deaf persons may be able to use sign language even though they, themselves, are not hearing impaired.)

YOU HAVE TO BE DEAF TO UNDERSTAND

by Willard J. Madsen

What is it like to "hear" a hand?
You have to be deaf to understand!

What is it like to be a small child,
In a school, in a room void of sound—
With a teacher who talks and talks and talks;
And then when she does come around to you,
She expects you to know what she's said?
You have to be deaf to understand.

Or the teacher who thinks that to make you smart,
You must first learn how to talk with your voice;
So mumbo-jumbo with hands on your face
For hours and hours without patience or end,
Until out comes a faint resembling sound?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to be curious,
To thirst for knowledge you can call your own,
With an inner desire that's set on fire——
And you ask a brother, sister, or friend
Who looks in answer and says, "Never mind!"?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like in a corner to stand,
Though there's nothing you've done really wrong,
Other than try to make use of your hands
To a silent peer to communicate
A thought that comes to your mind all at once?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to be shouted at
When one thinks that will help you to hear;
Or misunderstand the words of a friend
Who is trying to make a joke clear,
And you don't get the point because he's failed?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to be laughed in the face
When you try to repeat what is said;
Just to make sure that you've understood,
And you find that the words were misread——
And you want to cry out, "Please help me, friend!"?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to have to depend
Upon one who can hear to phone a friend;
Or place a call to a business firm
And be forced to share what's personal, and,
Then find that your message wasn't made clear?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to be deaf and alone
In the company of those who can hear—
And you only guess as you go along,
For no one's there with a helping hand,
As you try to keep up with words and song?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like on the road of life
To meet with a stranger who opens his mouth——
And speaks out a line at a rapid pace;
And you can't understand the look in his face
Because it is new and you're lost in the race?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to comprehend
Some nimble fingers that paint the scene,
And make you smile and feel serene
With the "spoken word" of the moving hand
That makes you part of the world at large?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to "hear" a hand?
Yes, you have to be deaf to understand!

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MUTTERINGS OVER THE CRIB OF A DEAF CHILD

James Wright

"How will he hear the bell at school
Arrange the broken afternoon,
And know to run across the cool
Grasses where the starlings cry,
Or understand the day is gone?"

Well, someone lifting curious brows
Will take the measure of the clock.
And he will see the birchen boughs
Outside sagging dark from the sky,
And the shade crawling upon the rock.

"And how will he know to rise at morning?
His mother has other sons to waken,
She has the stove she must build to burning
Before the coals of the nighttime die;
And he never stirs when he is shaken."

I take it the air affects the skin,
And you remember, when you were young,
Sometimes you could feel the dawn begin,
And the fire would call you, by and by,
Out of the bed and bring you along.

"Well, good enough. To serve his needs
All kinds of arrangements can be made.
But what will you do if his finger bleeds?
Or a bobwhite whistles invisibly
And flutes like an angel off in the shade?"

He will learn pain. And, as for the bird,
It is always darkening when that comes out.
I will putter as though I had not heard,
And lift him into my arms and sing
Whether he hears my song or not.

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POEMS ABOUT PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENT

"Days of Memory" by B. L. Stafford

In B. L. Stafford, An Obscured Radiance.
El Paso, TX: Endeavors in Humanity Press, 1978.

Supplementary Poetry

"The Hunchback in the Park" by D. Thomas

In D. Thomas. The Poems of Dylan Thomas.
New York: New Directions, 1971.

For the Teacher

Bart Lanier Stafford III, the author of "Days of Memory," has cerebral palsy. His life was shaped to a large extent by his disability and people's reactions to it. His memories are largely tinged with bitterness or sorrow at the limitations imposed upon him. School was not for him. Speaking was a struggle. Other children teased him. His parents wanted him to inhibit his disability or be extra nice so that others might tolerate him in spite of it.

"The Hunchback in the Park" by Dylan Thomas is a rather difficult poem which might be used in honors classes. It reflects multiple points of view revolving about an individual with a physical disability, including prejudices common in older children and adults.

Additional Resources for the Teacher

1. United Cerebral Palsy Associations, Inc.
   66 East 34th Street, New York, NY 10016

   (single copies free)

   Cerebral Palsy--Facts and Figures

   What is Cerebral Palsy

2. National Easter Seal Society for Crippled Children and adults
   2023 West Ogden Avenue, Chicago, IL 60612

   (single copies free)

   When You See In Your School a New Student Who Has a Physical Disability

3. The Scoliosis Research Society
   430 North Michigan Avenue, Room 800, Chicago, IL 60611

   (single copies free)

   Scoliosis...What's That?

Lesson Plan

Theme: What it feels like to grow up with a physical disability.

Objectives:

- Students will identify two ways in which a physical disability limited or hurt the subject of the poem(s).
- Students will identify two ways in which other people limited or hurt the subject of the poem(s).

Introducing the Lesson

"Think back to the years when you were in elementary school. Was there ever a time when you were left out of what others were doing? Can you recall how you felt?" Have a few students describe the situations and the feelings associated with them.

"The poem(s) we are going to read today is about the memories of a person with a physical disability on being left out of many things during his childhood and later."

Have the students read the poem "Days of Memory" to themselves.

Discussion Guide

Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1. In the poem "Days of Memory" the author recalls experiences filled with efforts to do what other children do. In what kinds of situations did he he have to put forth unusual effort to be able to do what other children did? (Cue: What does he mean by the phrase "words crippled" in the fourth verse?)	Running freely and happily around a grassy yard. Running was not an easy activity for him. He could not do it without thought, with little effort. He probably had to concentrate to keep his balance so that he would not fall. Reading out loud in Sunday school. Speaking clearly was probably another activity that required concentrated effort. He referred to his words as being crippled just as people undoubtedly referred to him as being crippled.
2. Bart Stafford also recalls painful experiences from his childhood. What were these?	Months of teasing. Being excluded from school. (If the author were a child today he could not be excluded from school.)
3. How did the author fulfill his zest for living?	Mostly vicariously through hours and hours of reading. Also through movies. Read the line "Insatiable appetite for vicarious life" from the eleventh stanza. Ask the students to explain what was meant by this.
4. In the poem is a section which reflects the advice or directions given to the author when he was a child by, most likely, his parents. Find that section. What kind of guidelines was he given?	Stanzas 16 and 17. Have a student read the guidelines out loud. "Don't salivate, grimace, fall down, slow a fast world, and don't make scenes!...give much more than you get, always smile and laugh even if it hurts."
5. What does this advice amount to (or mean)?	Try to be like everyone else. Limit or control the ways in which you are different because of your disability, and be super nice so that people may like you in spite of your unpleasant disability manifestations.

6. What effect do you think this advice had upon the author?	It probably reinforced his feelings of inferiority and prevented him from feeling free to express any negative feelings, even when they were justified.
7. If you had to sum up how the author feels about his life, what would you say?	There were too many struggles and disappointments; not enough joys or realizations of hopes and ambitions.

Writing Assignment

Have the students select one or another of the writing assignments which follow.

1. Write a brief poem to Bart Stafford to communicate to him how you feel about his experiences, his life, and/or his poem.
2. Imagine that you are the parent of a child with cerebral palsy like Bart Stafford. Write a letter to your son (daughter) who is entering adolescence to help guide him/her toward a full and rich life.

Supplementary Activity

Poetry Reading and Discussion (For honors classes)

Have students read the poem "The Hunchback in the Park." Then discuss the following questions.

1. What image of a physically disabled person appears in this poem?

   (An image of a disabled man as subhuman.)

2. What connotations does the term "hunchback" have?

   (The term has taken on derogatory connotations.)

3. How do the truant boys react to the physically disabled man?

4. What fantasy did the physically impaired man have? Why?

5. Why does the author believe the wild boys are "innocent as strawberries"?

6. The subject of this poem lived as an outcast, a role which society assigned to him and he accepted or tolerated. Many changes have taken place in the years since this poem was written. What is different today?

   (Society no longer officially sanctions or tolerates any form of discrimination against or exclusion of the handicapped. There is a greater degree of acceptance and integration of individuals with disabilities into the mainstream of society. Boys who mocked a physically disabled man would not as likely be forgiven as innocents.)

"Days of Memory"

by Bart L. Stafford III

The days of a lifetime
blend together lazily,
ragged patchwork sewed
by a blind seamstress.

Out of those days, those
thousands of days, only a few
minutes remain intact for mind's
remembrances of joys and sorrows.

A picnic in the park,
rich kids' front yard,
trying hard to run in
happy grassy freedom.

A fight in downstairs hall after
months of senseless teasing, the
hated head banging on mailboxes,
A shining moment of unexpected power.

Reciting in Sunday School,
words crippled, barely heard,
one verse skipped, forgotten,
yet winning another Bible.

The ball games on the block,
always providing ball and bats
to make certain that I got
a place on one of the teams.

Waiting stolidly, patiently at my window
for the school kids to be given release,
spirit always imprisoned within my body,
forever with torn knees, ripped trousers.

Schooling for me beyond asking,
no one daring the first movement,
everyone seeing only difficulty
and burdens and ultimate failure.

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Days pass, meld into a bleak mosaic,
quilt's colors fading with the years,
weaker, more indistinct, the fabric
thinner, damaged, mended in places.

Years go, grey years, orange years,
triumphs, failures, some unspoiled
by falls or bleeding or rejections,
movie years, ballgame days, reading.

Reading! My God, the books, the words!
Insatiable appetite for vicarious life,
for understanding of what made this country,
this world, what it now appears to me to be.

A book a day, grinding them out as if
a quota had to be met, so many pages
in so many hours, nobody quite
understanding my need, but obliging.

I was always a creature of my age;
my world began with Dreiser, Upton
Sinclair, Sinclair Lewis, Broun,
Shaw, with Balzac a huge concession.

Books made the only sense I saw,
a beginning, middle and end;
not like life or people, who had
no organization, no plot, no logic.

Where did they all go, the hopes
impossible to achieve, the fires
of ambition cooled, the flaring
genious overpowered, submerged, lost?

All the struggle wasted now, with
demands impossible to fulfill; don't
salivate, grimace, fall down, slow a
fast world, and don't make scenes!

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Above all, give much more than you get,
always smile and laugh even if it hurts.
Maybe, with all this, people won't notice,
perhaps, despite everything, people will like you.

This has all gone into the faded
patchwork sewed by a blind seamstress,
the quilt threadbare and discolored,
soon to be lost, discarded forever.

Only the peaks of the mountain remains,
the memory fading with the years,
only the valleys of defeats linger,
the dry plains of soiled disillusion.

The shining lights of success,
a contest won, a plaque earned,
friendships cemented, bills paid,
clippings from magazines, papers,

Is this all that a life contains?
Can this be all worth remembering?
Saner minds than mine must answer.
For I, simple soul, only say, "Quen-sabe?"

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"The Hunchback In The Park"

by Dylan Thomas

The hunchback in the park
A solitary mister
Propped between trees and water
From the opening of the garden lock
That lets the trees and water enter
Until the Sunday sombre bell at dark (sad, gloomy)

Eating bread from a newspaper
Drinking water from the chained cup
That the children filled with gravel
In the fountain basin where I sailed my ship
Slept at night in a dog kennel
But nobody chained him up.

Like the park birds he came early
Like the water he sat down
And Mister they called Hey mister
The truant boys from the town
Running when he heard then clearly
On out of sound

Past lake and rockery (a rock garden)
Laughing when he shook his paper
Hunchbacked in mockery (making fun)
Through the land zoo of the willow groves (groups of willow trees)
Dodging the park keeper
With his stick that picked up leaves.

And the old dog sleeper
Alone between nurses and swans
While the boys among willows
Made the tigers jump out of their eyes
To roar on the rockery stones
And the groves were blue with sailors

Made all day until bell-time
A woman figure without fault
Straight as a young elm
Straight and tall from his crooked bones
That she might stand in the night
After the locks and chains

All night in the unmade park
After the railings and shrubberies
The birds the grass the trees the lake
And the wild boys innocent as strawberries
Had followed the hunchback
To his kennel in the dark.

THE POEMS of Dylan Thomas. Copyright 1943
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Literature for Junior High And Intermediate Schools

Byars, B. The Summer of the Swans. New York: Avon, 1970. (paper)

Other edition:

Byars, B. The Summer of the Swans. New York: Viking, 1970.

For the Teacher

Summer of the Swans is a beautiful story of a young girl who is beginning to understand life and people. A dramatic episode brings illumination to her swiftly and suddenly.

At the beginning of the book we see Sara as a fourteen year old concerned with her appearance and with being popular. Sara's younger brother is retarded, a fact which Sara cannot discuss openly. She sees her brother as the family's problem, and is embarrassed by it. She cannot understand how her older sister can talk about their retarded brother to her classmates. When Sara's brother is missing, Sara at first responds in accordance with her feelings that Charlie is the family's problem. She begs her aunt not to call the police. She rejects help from a boy named Joe Melby. Eventually the police, Joe Melby and all the townspeople join in the search. In the course of it all Sara learns that most people care and want to help, and that their help is essential. She also begins to realize that her values were awry; that she has grown and has much more growing still to do. She comes to accept herself and her brother, just as Joe Melby has accepted her and the townspeople have accepted Charlie.

This book is rich in potential discussion ideas. The lessons which follow only develop some of these. The concepts selected for exploration are either crucial for an understanding of the book, or critical to the disability-related themes selected.

A detailed knowledge of mental retardation is not essential to the use of this book. Students may, however, ask questions about Charlie's condition. His is not a typical kind of mental retardation. Most mental retardation is not caused by illness in childhood. It is either caused by physical pathology present before or at birth, or it develops gradually during childhood. This latter type is frequently found in families which have serious social and economic problems. Most retarded children, unlike Charlie, can and do learn to speak. The particular group of characteristics ascribed to Charlie by the author is common in children sometimes called autistic. Except for the lack of speech, it is also commonly found in children called brain injured.

Additional Information on Mental Retardation for the Teacher

See the units on Of Mice and Men and Flowers for Algernon.

Fact: One Out of Ten Americans Has a Mentally Retarded Person in His Family. 1974 (15¢)

Facts on Mental Retardation. 1973 (25¢)

The above can be obtained from: Association for Retarded Citizens-National, 2709 Avenue E, East Arlington, Texas 76011

Hello World! 1979

The Problem of Mental Retardation.

Single copies free from: The President's Committee on Mental Retardation, Washington, DC 20201.

Lesson I

Theme: Mentally retarded individuals can be valued and loved family members even though they bring special stresses.

Objectives:

- .Students will be able to give examples from this book which demonstrate that mentally retarded individuals may be well loved by their families.
- .Students will be able to describe the stresses which being the sibling of a mentally retarded individual may involve.

Introducing the Lesson

Say to the class: "This is the story of one summer in the life of a 14 year old girl named Sara. A very dramatic event occurs that summer. What is that event?"

The event is the disappearance of Sara's brother.

Then state: "We are going to look at how this event changed Sara, made her understand things she hadn't understood before, and made her feel different about herself."

Discussion Guide

Teacher Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1. Tell us about Sara. How did she feel about herself? Why was she having such a bad summer?	Sara was very conscious of how she looked and she didn't like the way she looked. She was afraid that no boy would like her, and at 14 she was at an age where this was beginning to matter to her. She felt that looks were everything.
2. Tell us about Charlie. What was he like? What could he do? What could he not do?	Charlie was a 10 year old boy who was brain injured. He couldn't speak. He could understand much of what was said to him. He needed help in doing many things such as putting a lollipop stick back in the candy part of the lollipop, making a tent, winding a watch. He was very fearful. Little things bothered him, like a button being missing from his clothes. He had no friends outside his family. He loved looking at the swans.
3. How had Charlie gotten that way?	When he was 3 he had two serious illnesses with very high fevers. He had amost died and had been left with brain damage from them.

4. How did Sara feel about her brother? How do you know?	Embarrassed or ashamed. Protective. Loving. Mildly annoyed sometimes. Elicit examples.
5. In what ways was Sara sensitive to her brother; helpful to her brother?	Sara understood him. You may want to have a student read the passage below which illustrates this understanding. "There's something about me that makes me understand Charlie. It's like I know how he feels about things. Like sometimes I'll be walking down the street and I'll pass the jewelers and I'll think that if Charlie were here he would want to stand right there and look at those watches all afternoon and I know right where he'd stand and how he'd put his hands up on the glass and how his face would look" (p. 101). Sara helped him with his lollipop (pages 13, 16, 17-18), and with his tent (pages 18-19). She taught him to feed the swans (pages 41,44). She reassured him when his Aunt Willie went off on a motorcycle and her screams of excitement frightened him.
6. In what ways was she not sensitive to her brother's needs?	She leaves him sitting alone on her friend's porch after she had told him she was going to take him to see the swans. She is impatient with him at times. She complains about having to take Charlie along all the time. She ignored his request for help with a missing button.

7.	How does Sara's behavior toward her younger brother compare with that of most teenagers toward their younger sisters and brothers?	Sara was probably a lot more considerate and helpful toward Charlie than most teenagers are toward their younger siblings. Sara was preoccupied with herself, her feelings and the changes in her own life that summer. She was probably less sensitive to Charlie's needs that summer than she had been a few months earlier, when things seemed to be going right for her, or than she would be in the future when she would again find a path for herself.

Read the passage which follows. Then continue with question #8.

> "You mean you talk about Charlie to perfect strangers? To your class? I think that's awful." She put her feet into the grooves worn in the steps by Charlie. "What do you say? Let me tell you all about my retarded brother--it's so interesting?" It was the first time in her life that she had used the term "retarded" in connection with her brother, and she looked quickly away from the figure in the white tent. Her face felt suddenly hot and she snapped a leaf from the rhododendron bush by the steps and held it against her forehead (p. 22).

8.	Why was Sara ashamed of talking about Charlie in public?	Charlie was different. He couldn't do many things that other children his age could. Some of the neighborhood children called him a "retard" and teased him. Sara was a teenager. She wanted to be like other teenagers. Since

	her family was part of her identity, having a retarded brother made her feel different and vulnerable. She was already feeling inadequate because she thought she wasn't pretty enough.
9. How was Wanda's attitude about Charlie different from Sara's?	Wanda was not ashamed of having a retarded brother. She wanted to find out as much as she could about helping him. She didn't mind talking about her relationship with Charlie to people she thought might help her understand him or get help for him. Wanda felt good and sure about herself, so having a retarded brother didn't make her feel inadequate or afraid or embarrassed.
10. What did Wanda mean when she said: "Charlie's everybody's problem?"	She meant that society in general has a responsibility to people who are retarded. The family can't be expected to meet all his needs itself. There are many retarded individuals. They sometimes need special education programs, speech therapy, vocational training, places to live when they get older. They need everybody's help.

Concluding statement: "Today we recognize that all of the needs of seriously retarded people cannot be met by their families alone. Our government and all of us as individuals have to share this responsibility."

Homework Assignment or Supplementary Activity

Composition

Reread the example given in the book where a girl named Gretchen calls Charlie a "reeeeetard" (p. 80). Then write an answer to each of the following:

1. Explain why Gretchen did that, and why it made Sara so angry.

2. Think about times when you have used the word retard (or heard it used by someone else). When did you use it? Why? What did you mean by it?

3. What's wrong with calling someone a "retard"? What could you say or do instead?

Small Group Discussion

The above questions may also be dealt with in small discussion groups. Divide the class into groups of about eight pupils each. Have each group select a discussion leader and recorder. Ask the group leaders to read the example on page 80 to their groups. Then have each group discuss the three questions and come to some conclusions. Call the groups together and discuss the conclusions which the groups arrived at in response to each of the three questions.

Lesson II

Theme: Mentally retarded individuals can be valued and loved family members.

Objectives:

- Students will recognize that mentally retarded individuals can be well loved family members.
- Students will recognize that mentally retarded individuals can return the feelings of love toward family members.
- Students will recognize that mentally retarded persons are everyone's responsibility.

Introducing the Lesson

Say to the class: "Charlie is missing. Aunt Willie wants to call the police. Sara doesn't want her to. Who is right?" Ask one pupil to be Sara and another to be Aunt Willie. Ask "Sara" to explain to Aunt Willie why she shouldn't call the police. Make the explanation include Sara's real feelings. Have "Aunt Willie" explain why she must call the police. Include Aunt Willie's feelings about her own role in Charlie's being lost.

The point of the above dramatization is to help the pupils understand that part of Sara's reason for not wanting the police called is her feeling that "Charlie's our problem." Even though she loves Charlie, she is embarrassed and uncomfortable about bringing "strangers" into the problem, about making it known to them about making it their problem. While this hiding and shame is mild, it comes from the same source as the greater shame which caused some retarded children to be hidden away by their families in the past. In this story, Sara's reluctance to involve others in finding Charlie did no harm. In other cases, it might mean the difference between life and death for a retarded individual.

Aunt Willie wants the police called for rational reasons. She knows how frightened Charlie will be if he's lost and in what great danger he is. She wants as much help as possible in finding him. But Aunt Willie also feels partly responsible for Charlie's leaving. She realizes that she didn't respond to him satisfactorily when he asked her repeatedly to replace his missing button. She feels guilty about that now, even though what she did was really not a bad thing, because she realizes how the missing button bothered Charlie.

If the pupils doing the dramatization do not refer to the above reasons, cue them in. If this still is not sufficient, summarize the ideas in the above statement which were left out.

Conclude by saying: "Both Sara and Aunt Willie were concerned about Charlie, but they wanted to proceed in different ways. Sara's preference was partially a reflection of not wanting to share the problem with others. Aunt Willie felt no need to keep the problem in the family. She is not ashamed or embarrassed about Charlie in any way."

Discussion Guide

Teacher Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1. Why was Sara so angry at Joe Melby at the beginning of the book?	When Joe Melby returned Charlie's missing watch, Sara assumed he had stolen it. Sara may also have been using Joe Melby to express her mixed feelings about boys in general.
2. What did Sara do to express her anger against Joe Melby?	She stuck a sign on his back which said "FINK."
3. After Charlie was lost and Joe Melby offered to help, how did Sara act?	She rejected his help. When he persisted, she accused him of having stolen her brother's watch. Eventually, she agreed, without enthusiasm, to let him search for Charlie.
4. How did Sara feel about how she had treated Joe after she learned that he had not taken Charlie's watch?	She felt terrible. She also realized that she had acted hastily and without evidence. She expected others to behave cruelly toward Charlie, and so she had jumped to the immediate conclusion that Joe had done so.

5. Why did Sara's feelings toward Joe Melby change?	First she learned from her friend Mary that she had been wrong about him taking Charlie's watch. He had actually rescued the watch from other boys who had taken it. Then she saw that he genuinely wanted to help find Charlie. She also learned that he was a nice person; that he accepted her and was ready to help her too.
6. What evidence was there in the book that people recognized their responsibility to help with Charlie, or wanted to help the family?	Everyone in town was involved in the search for Charlie. As Sara said: "The police came and all the neighbors are out--there must be a hundred people looking for you. You were on the radio. It's like you were the President of the United States or something" (p. 129). After Charlie was found all the searchers reached out to pat Charlie and say things like: "Well, now we can all sleep in peace tonight." or "Oh, your aunt is going to be so happy" (p. 131).
7. Describe the family's feelings after Charlie was found.	Sara felt wildly joyful. Then she just felt good. Aunt Willie was released from "the blackest day of my life." Wanda rushed to get home when she heard Charlie was found and wanted to see him. Charlie's father was relieved of concern when he learned that Charlie had been found and was all right.

8. Describe Charlie's reaction to Sara and Aunt Willie after he was found.	When Sara found him she describes his reaction: "As he saw Sara a strange expression came over his face, an expression of wonder and joy and disbelief, and Sara knew that if she lived to be a hundred no one would ever look at her quite that way again" (p. 126). When Charlie saw Aunt Willie he let out a joyous yell, and then ran until he fell into her arms.

"Everybody's going to be so glad to see you it's going to be just like New Year's Eve" (p. 130).

9. Sara made this statement to Charlie. What does this statement show about Sara's perception of people's reactions to Charlie?	Sara's perception has changed. At the beginning of the story she felt that Charlie was "the family's problem." Now she realizes not only that she loves Charlie very much, but that most people want to help with Charlie, and that the family needs the support of others.
10. How did Sara's values and feelings about herself change during this story?	She came to realize that there are more important things to life than how one looks. She also came to accept herself as she was, just as she came to accept Charlie as he was.

11. What is the meaning of Sara's vision that life is a series of huge uneven steps?

Read the passage below to the students and then have them respond:

> She suddenly saw life as a series of huge uneven steps, and she saw herself on the steps, standing motionless in her prison shirt, and she had just taken an enormous step up out of the shadows, and she was standing, waiting, and there were other steps in front of her, so that she could go as high as the sky, and she saw Charlie on a flight of small difficult steps and her father down at the bottom of some steps, just sitting and not trying to go further (p. 140).

Sara sees that she has grown, and that she can grow more. She sees that the path for Charlie will be slow and arduous. She realizes that her father has given up and is no longer growing as a person.

Supplementary Activities

Composition

Suppose that you had a retarded brother or sister. Describe how having this person as a brother or sister would affect your life.

Reading

Read one of the pamphlets listed below. (See "Additional Information on Mental Retardation for the Teacher" for sources of these pamphlets.) Then list three facts which you learned from this reading. Briefly describe how this new information affected your beliefs about mental retardation.

Fact: One Out of Ten Americans Has a Mentally Retarded Person in His Family.

Facts on Mental Retardation.

Hello World!

The Problem of Mental Retardation.

Blume, J. _Deenie_. New York: Dell, 1973. (paper)

For the Teacher

Judy Blume, the author of Deenie, is extremely popular with 11-14 year olds. Many of her books deal with special problems in young adolescents. Deenie is one of these books.

Scoliosis is a common condition in older children and adolescents, so common in fact that school-based scoliosis screening programs are currently being planned or instituted in several different parts of the country. It is estimated that about 2% of the adolescent population has spinal curvatures. Mild scoliosis often goes undetected or is noted only by clothing being slightly shorter on one side than on the other. In rare instances, scoliosis is severe enough to make breathing difficult, as well as to severely deform the body. Fortunately, when identified in the early stages, scoliosis can often be corrected. Often this involves the wearing of a brace. The Milwaukee Brace described in the book Deenie is not always necessary. An abbreviated orthopedic brace, which allows much greater ease of movement, has been found to be satisfactory in some instances.

While scoliosis is common, orthopedic braces are still not common. (They will become increasingly common as scoliosis detection programs go into effect.) Thus some children and adolescents may feel a stigma attached to the wearing of a brace. They may experience some of the same questions, feelings and struggles which Deenie experienced: Am I handicapped? Will others shun me or not know how to act with me? I'm no longer attractive. I'm different. How can I face the other kids? Will they think I'm a crud? Will they be afraid to look at me or get too close to me? The answer which the author, Judy Blume, proposes to this dilemma is openness on the part of both the individual with the condition and those who relate to her: Don't be afraid to talk about it. Tell the truth. Don't withdraw.

This book is particularly timely because of the growing focus on early identification of scoliosis, and because the author's point of view, openness, is the best approach for supporting the children and adolescents identified in such programs.

Additional Information about Scoliosis

Scoliosis...What's That?
Scoliosis: A Handbook for Patients

(Single copies of the above available free from The Scoliosis Research Society, 430 NOrth Michigan Avenue, Room 800, Chicago, IL 60611.)

Scoliosis Screening

(Single copies available free from: The Scoliosis Association, Inc., One Penn Plaza, New York, NY 10001.)

Lesson I

Theme: A person is more than his/her outside appearance.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to describe feelings, beliefs and values which interfere with relationships involving physically impaired persons.
- Students will be able to describe how Deenie's feelings about herself were affected by her newly discovered physical impairment.

Introducing the Lesson

Tell the class: "Deenie was a typical teenage girl until something happened to her that made her begin to see people in new ways. What was it that happened to her physically? (She developed scoliosis.) What is scoliosis? (A curvature of the spine.) How does it affect a person's appearance? (Depending upon its severity, it can involve a barely noticeable raising of one hip, or extreme distortions in shape and gait.) How common is scoliosis? (It is quite common in mild forms. About 2% of adolescents are thought to have scoliosis.)"

"Now let's look at how Deenie's scoliosis affected the way she thought and felt about herself and other people."

Discussion Guide

	Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1.	What value(s) did Deenie's mother have that even influenced her selection of a name for her daughter?	Deenie's mother valued physical beauty. She named Deenie after a movie character who was beautiful.
2.	In what other ways was Deenie's mother's behavior influenced by the value she placed on physical attractiveness?	She wanted Deenie to be a model. She boasted about Deenie's beauty.
3.	Is the high value which Deenie's mother placed on physical attractiveness common?	Yes. When Deenie gets on the bus with her mother the driver greets her with, "Hi Beautiful!" Magazines, television, movies all hold up models of beautiful women as the ones who are successful, loved and admired. Unattractive women are either rejected, ignored or used as the butt of jokes--objects of mockery.
4.	In what ways did Deenie's feelings about how people look resemble her mother's?	Deenie was repelled by people who were unattractive, impaired or different physically. She couldn't stand to look at "Old Lady Murray." She found Barbara's rash disgusting.
5.	Let's look more closely at how Deenie felt about people with impairments or other physical differences.	Read the passage below from page 6 to the class.

> I try not to look at Old Lady Murray because she's so ugly she makes me want to vomit. She has a big bump on her back and she can't stand up straight. You can see the bump right through the clothes.

6.	Why does Deenie feel this way? Why does she have such a strong, negative reaction?	Because she has been led to value physical attractiveness both by her mother and by society in general, and because Deenie is probably afraid of catching "handicap germs." Many people are afraid of contact with physically disabled people because it makes them feel that they might become disabled too. Of course, there is no such thing as "handicap germs." A person cannot catch a physical impairment like scoliosis.

7. Gena Courtney is a girl who lives on Deenie's street and who used to be in her class. Now Gena wears braces and is blind in one eye. How does Deenie feel about her now? Why doesn't she play with Gena?	Deenie feels that she doesn't know how to act toward Gena anymore. She feels uncomfortable about seeing or relating to Gena.
8. Why didn't Deenie like Barbara Curtis and why did she think of her as the "Creeping Crud?"	Because Barbara had a rash. Deenie was afraid of catching some terrible condition like leprosy from Barbara. Even though Barbara's rash was caused by allergies and wasn't catching, Deenie was afraid. Read the passage below to the class.

> When the bell rang I let go of Barbara's hand and ran for the row of sinks where I washed myself all over and lathered my hands at least six times (p. 33).

9. Has anyone here ever felt and acted like Deenie--afraid of catching "handicap germs" from someone? Tell us about it.	Ask the students to describe the condition involved and what happened. Don't moralize about it.
10. When Deenie found out that her spine was curved (scoliosis) how did she feel about herself?	First she was concerned about whether this would lead to death (p. 52). Then she wanted to have an operation to correct the impairment quickly. When she saw the brace that she would have to wear, she experienced shame. Have a student read Deenie's reaction to the brace.

> "I wanted to scream Forget it...I'm never going to wear that thing! Everyone will know. Everyone (p. 71)!"

11. What is it that Deenie didn't want everyone to know?	That she was different. That she had a physical impairment.

12. When she began wearing the brace did Deenie feel differently about herself than before she learned she had scoliosis?	Yes. She felt ugly. She was angry at herself for having a crooked spine.
13. Who contributed to making Deenie feel different (not as good)?	Her mother, who was very upset at the prospect of her daughter not being beautiful and perfect, and who told everyone not to talk to Deenie about her situation. Mrs. Anderson, the Vice Principal, who tried to sell Deenie on using the bus for handicapped children.
14. In spite of the scoliosis and the brace, Deenie was able to regain her good feeling about herself after a while. Think about the reasons for this. We'll discuss this topic in the next lesson.	

Supplementary Activities

Reading

Read one of the following pamphlets, and prepare a list of four new facts you learned about scoliosis from your reading.

Scoliosis...What's That?

Scoliosis: A Handbook for Patients.

Scoliosis Screening

Interview

Interview someone you know who wears a brace, or who used to wear a brace, to correct a spinal curvature. Find out both the facts and the person's feelings about this experience. Prepare an oral report for the class about this interview.

Composition

Imagine that you suddenly learned you had scoliosis and had to wear a brace. How do you think you would react? Describe your feelings and behavior. Compare your reaction, and that of your family and friends, to the reactions of Deenie, her family and her friends.

Lesson II

Theme: A person is more than his/her outside appearance.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to describe how and why Deenie's feelings about people with physical differences changed.
- Students will be able to describe appropriate and helpful ways of relating to someone with a physical impairment.

Introducing the Lesson:

"Deenie's scoliosis made her much more sensitive to people with disabilities and other differences. How many of you have experienced a situation (e.g. illness, temporary disability, disability of a relative) which made you much more sensitive to people with disabilities? Tell us about it."

Discussion Guide

Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1. Deenie's feelings about people with disabilities changed after she began wearing a brace. How did this happen? What enabled Deenie to change her perceptions and feelings about people with disabilities?	She began to realize that having an impairment or problem didn't make her any less a person, so it probably didn't make others any less human either. She realized that she was perceived as handicapped by some people, and that she was treated as different by them, even though she felt that she belonged with everyone else. She began to think about the feelings and needs of people with disabilities. Deenie's values were not her mother's values. She realized that there were more important things about people than their looks.

2. Give examples of how Deenie's feelings and behavior toward people with disabilities changed.	(a) Her reaction to Gena Courtney and the special class changed from discomfort/avoidance (p. 21) to thinking about and looking (p. 139). (b) Her reaction to "Old Lady Murray" changed from avoidance/revulsion (p. 6) to curiosity/friendliness (pp. 62, 114).
3. How was the change in the way Deenie felt about Barbara Curtis related to her growing sensitivity to people with impairments?	Barbara's rash was something which Deenie had viewed much the way she viewed "Old Lady Murray's" deformity or the impairments of the children in the special class--as something to be avoided, and as something which made the person having it someone to be avoided. Once Deenie began to look beyond impairments, she also looked at the person behind the rash. Read the passage below from pp. 32-33.

> I was so busy thinking about how to get out of being Susan's partner that I didn't even care that the Creeping Crud was getting changed next to me. Her real name is Barbara Curtis but I named her the Creeping Crud because she's got this disgusting rash all over her. It's supposed to be some kind of allergy but who wants to take the chance of finding out by touching her? It could be leprosy or something like that!...
>
> "It's not catching," Barbara said. "It's just eczema."
>
> "I know that," I told her.
>
> "You act like you're scared to touch me."

4.	Do people ever act that way toward handicapped persons? (Toward people with cerebral palsy for example.)	Yes. People often react as if they're afraid of catching "handicap germs."
5.	Are disabilities catching? (Can you catch cerebral palsy or mental retardation?)	No.
6.	Deenie grew psychologically from her experience. She learned to understand people and feelings better. The behavior of some people was very helpful to Deenie during her adjustment period. The behavior of other people was not helpful. What kinds of behavior were helpful?	Helpful behavior included her father's loving support and firmness; her sister's sharing, warmth and openness; her friends' honesty and acceptance; the adjustments and suggestions which her math teacher made to enable Deenie to work at a desk.
7.	What kinds of behavior were not helpful to Deenie?	Unhelpful behavior included her mother responding as if Deenie's whole life was ruined; her mother denying the implications of the scoliosis, i.e., the unlikelihood of Deenie becoming a model; her mother directing others not to refer to the brace; the Vice Principal pushing Deenie to use the bus provided for handicapped pupils; the sewing teacher not taking Deenie's disability into account.
8.	How did Deenie feel about herself and her disability at the end of the book?	She felt good about herself again. She realized that she could do almost all of the things she could do before. She realized that most people accepted her as they did before. She felt that she was the same person that she was before.
9.	When Deenie was invited to a scoliosis clinic where all of Dr. Kliner's patients would talk about wearing braces she decided to go. What does this show about Deenie?	Deenie was able to accept her situation and discuss it openly. She was able to accept her impairment without it making her feel any less "a regular girl."

Supplementary Activities

Composition or Small Group Discussion

The topics below may be pursued individually as written composition, or be used as the basis of small group discussions with oral reports back to the entire class.

1. Make a list of all of the activities which Deenie could engage in as she had before she began wearing a brace. Make another list of activities which she could still engage in or perform but with modification. Make a third list of activities she could not engage in or perform because of her brace. Draw a conclusion about how much Deenie's activities were changed or limited because of her need to wear a brace.*

2. Make a list of helpful ways of reacting to, or interacting with, people who have disabilities. Make another list of behaviors to avoid.

3. Explain each of the statements below.

   "I think I must have been really weird to not like her just because of her creeping crud (p. 137)."

   "I wonder if she (Gena Courtney) thinks of herself as a handicapped person or just a regular girl, like me (p. 139)."

   "'I'm not just a face!' I shouted. 'I'm a person too (p. 121).'"

   "I wish Ma would stop pretending. Does she think it's going to disappear if nobody says nothing (p. 100)?"

4. Read the passage on pp. 114-115 in which Deenie talks to "Old Lady Murray." Explain why Ms. Murray responds as she does. (What does her reaction tell you about her life?) Relate Ms. Murray's responses to Deenie's response to Harvey Grabowsky on p. 113--"I jumped off the Empire State Building!"

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*If you can obtain a brace designed to correct scoliosis, allow the students to examine and discuss it prior to pursuing this composition or group discussion. (Sometimes braces are kept by the families of adolescents who have outgrown them or no longer use them.)

Role Playing

Identify two or three situations in which Deenie might have found herself during the first few weeks after she began wearing a brace that might have been very stressful to her. In each situation have one student play Deenie, another student play someone who acts helpfully toward Deenie, and another student play someone who acts in such a way as to make Deenie's adjustment to her brace more difficult. After each dramatization ask the class to state what principle was being illustrated by the role playing about how people can behave helpfully towards someone who has a physical impairment.

Mathis, S. B. Listen for the Fig Tree.
New York: Avon, 1975. (paper)

For the Teacher

Listen for the Fig Tree is the story of the maturing of a black girl who is blind. Muffin has a very difficult life. This difficulty, however, stems primarily from her father's death and her mother's subsequent breakdown, rather than from her blindness. Muffin had learned to live with her blindness. Her father had nurtured a sense of self-reliance and independence in her. She was a competent and active young person. Only when Muffin feels overwhelmed by trying to care for her drunken mother does her blindness cause her to be bitter.

Muffin's environment is both benevolent and cruel. Her neighbors care about her and help her without making her dependent. Her boyfriend helps her acquire a sense of the important values in life--caring for others and a feeling of community with other black persons. But there is malevolence in the black community too. It was black men who murdered her father and a black man who tries to rape her.

One of the joys of this book is that it does not over-simplify. It does not imply that Muffin was attacked because she was blind. Another young girl in the neighborhood was raped in a similar attack even though she was not blind. Young girls are vulnerable to such attacks by sick men. Sick (or bad) men are not all either white or black. While Muffin's attacker was black, the rapist of the other young woman was white.

This book communicates a feeling of respect and love for all different kinds of people. Mr. Dale may own the bar where her mother and others get drunk, and may be a homosexual, and may be overly concerned with superficial things, but he also is loving and sensitive. Muffin's mother drinks and causes her daughter great stress, but she is fiercely proud of Muffin. Old Mr. Thomas doesn't speak and may be "simple," but he risks his life to keep Muffin from being harmed.

Above all, this is a story about strength and love. Muffin is blind, but she has both of these qualities in abundance.

Additional Information on Blindness

American Foundation for the Blind
15 West 16th Street, New York, NY 10011

(single copies free)

Products for People with Vision Problems. 79/80 (illustrated catalogue)

Dickman, I. R. Living with Blindness. 1972

Facts about Blindness. 1974

What Do You Do When You See a Blind Person? 1976

Lesson I

Theme: People with disabilities are whole people.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to identify ten important functions which Muffin carried out independently and competently.
- Students will be able to describe four modifications which Muffin made in the way she did things in order to take her disability into account.

Introducing the Lesson

Ask the students to tell you the first words or phrases that come to mind when they hear the word "blind" (or "blindness"). (Cues: "What feelings do you have when you think of this word? What does it make you think of?") List the students' responses on the chalkboard. They may include words like: sad, terrible, pity, helpless. Then state: "Many people think of blind persons as helpless and unhappy. They think that blind persons are to be pitied because they can't take care of themselves or have a full life. Let's look at the character 'Muffin' in the book Listen for the Fig Tree and see how well this picture fits her."

Discussion Guide

Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1. What kind of a person is Muffin? How would you describe her to someone else?	Muffin is bright and competent. She is also hard-working, independent and warm.
2. Is Muffin helpless? Is she unable to take care of herself?	Muffin is far from helpless. She not only takes care of herself, but also takes charge of her home. Sometimes she needs help and asks for it appropriately, but she can and does do more than many sighted adolescents.
3. What kinds of things does Muffin do that surprised you, that you didn't know could be done by blind persons?	She: (a) tells time (p. 2) (b) crochets (p. 12) (c) cuts out shapes (p. 11) (d) cooks (p. 24) (e) shops (p. 29)
4. What kinds of special techniques does she use that enable her to do some things independently which usually are done by seeing?	(a) She arranges her clothes in a particular order. (b) She puts braille labels on foods. (c) She folds bills (money) of different denominations in different ways.
5. What kinds of things does Muffin need help with?	(a) Activities in which there is no substitute for seeing, e.g., selecting and cutting a dress pattern. (b) Keeping her mother from getting in trouble. Muffin needs help with this not because she is blind but because this is an extremely difficult task.

6. In what ways is Muffin's life limited by her blindness? Does Muffin have a full life?	Muffin's blindness limits the fullness of her life very little. She goes to school, has a boyfriend, has a dream for the future, has friends, very competently takes care of herself and the household, and has a sense of belongingness with other black people. There are, of course, some things like driving a car or seeing decorations that Muffin cannot do, but she has found substitutes for them, e.g., other ways of getting places, feeling shapes and surfaces, getting people to describe things for her. She is not missing out on the important things in life.
7. How does Muffin feel about being blind? Is she unhappy and bitter about it? Does she feel it limits her life?	Muffin accepts her blindness. She is not in misery because she is blind. But when life becomes particularly difficult because of her mother's behavior, when Muffin feels overwhelmed by her mother's problem, she feels her blindness as another source of stress that she wishes were not there. Read the passage which follows to the class.

> "Things wouldn't be so bad, Ernie, if I could see and I'm not sad about it because I do all right and everybody helps me...When my father was alive, I didn't care too much about I couldn't see but with him gone and Momma going out in the street all the time--real late, I just wish I could see."(p. 33)

8. What feelings do you have about Muffin? Do you pity her? (If so, do you pity her because she is blind?)	Some students may respond affirmatively because they feel that Muffin is unlucky to be blind and that her life would have been easier if she had been sighted. This is a legitimate way of looking at the situation. Other students may respond by saying that they pity Muffin because of her mother's behavior and her father's death, which make her life more difficult than her blindness does. Students should also see that Muffin is a character who elicits respect and admiration. Pity which reflects a belief that Muffin is in misery, or is helpless, or does not have a full life, is ill founded.

9. Do you think Muffin wants to be pitied? How do you think Muffin would want people to feel about her?	Muffin hates being pitied whether for her blindness or for her mother's drinking. Read the statement from p. 48 which follows.

> "People just feel sorry for us and I hate it. I hate it!"

	Muffin wants to be cared about as other people are--as a friend, a neighbor, a girl friend. Have a student read out loud the passage from p. 64 which follows.

> "You do everything just right like your father and I'm real proud cause you can do more blind as a bat than a whole person."
>
> "I am a whole person, Momma."

10. Why is this passage important?	This passage contains the major message of the book--Muffin is a whole person. Her blindness does not make her less than a whole person.

Concluding Statement: "Sometimes people don't think of blind persons as whole persons. Muffin is a whole person. She does not let her blindness keep her from experiencing a full life. She has all the same feelings and goals as other teenage girls."

Class or Homework Assignment

Ask students to locate and write ten sentences from the book which show Muffin functioning independently and competently. Each sentence should illustrate a different ability.

Supplementary Activities

Readings

1. Read one of the pamphlets below and list three new facts you learned from it about blindness.

    Dickman, I. R. Living with Blindness.

    Facts about Blindness

2. Read What Do You Do When You See a Blind Person? and describe ways of relating both correctly and incorrectly to a blind person in three different situations.

3. Study the illustrated catalogue Products for People with Vision Problems. 79/80
    List three pieces of adapted equipment for the blind and describe how each item operates or what principles were used in modifying it for use by blind persons.

Composition

Imagine that you are Muffin. Pick a day in Muffin's life and write a diary entry for that day as Muffin might have written it.

Simulations

Select three tasks that Muffin might perform and attempt to do them with the use of senses other than vision. The tasks might include sewing, knitting, dusting furniture, hanging up articles of clothing, selecting articles of clothing. (Avoid any activity which might be dangerous for someone who normally relies on vision, such as cooking. Ask a friend or relative to stay near you as you undertake these tasks.)

Briefly describe how you felt and how effective you were in performing these activities without using your sight.

Lesson II

Theme: Blind people may be emotionally healthy and strong.

Objective:

Students will be able to identify three situations which demonstrate Muffin's emotional health and strength.

Introducing the Lesson

Read the passage which follows to the class.

> When Muffin walked away Mr. Dale called her back sharply. "My God!" he shrieked. "You're slouching! For God's sake, Muffin, don't slouch! Strut with that cane, strut." (p. 20)

Ask the students why Mr. Dale made such a fuss about how Muffin was walking. Some of the students may say that Mr. Dale was very involved with appearance, with the way people looked. That's true, but he was also trying to teach Muffin to be proud of herself, of who and what she was. Ask the students if Mr. Dale's relationship to Muffin was helpful. What made it helpful? In what ways was it helpful?

Concluding statement: "Even though Mr. Dale was connected with things Muffin didn't like--his bar, his men friends--and even though Muffin came to see that there are more important things than how one looks, Mr. Dale helped her grow in important ways. He taught her to be proud of herself and to be self-reliant. He showed her that she could go on even when life seemed terrible."

Discussion Guide

Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1. Let's look at this side of Muffin, not her blindness but her emotional strength. In what ways did Muffin show that she was an emotionally healthy and strong person?	(a) By coping with her mother. (b) By dealing with the world again and enjoying herself again after the attack had taken place. (c) By becoming even more determined than ever to help her mother back to health.
2. Let's look at some of the stressful times that Muffin had with her mother. What were they about?	(a) Muffin's mother wanting medicine when it would have been dangerous for her. (b) Muffin's mother being drunk and not wanting to leave the bar. (c) Muffin's mother being drunk and vomiting all over. (d) Muffin's mother being high (manic) and not being able to control herself as when she wanted to buy a television set they couldn't afford.
3. We're going to pick one of these episodes and read it out loud so that we can better see what was demanded of Muffin and how she dealt with it.	Select one of the following episodes: (a) Muffin's mother not wanting to leave the midnight club--pp. 16-19. (b) Muffin's mother wanting her medicine--pp. 21-23. (c) Muffin's mother out-of-control in the department store--pp. 40-43. Select one student to read the dialogue of each of the persons involved in the episode, while you read the narration. After the episode has been read out loud, ask the students the kinds of questions which follow.
4. How did Muffin feel during this incident?	The demands and stresses which Leola's behavior put upon Muffin would have been a great burden for any adolescent. Muffin tried to control and protect her mother in spite of her feelings of shame, fear, sorrow and despair. The fact that she kept trying and that she was able to keep functioning--running the household and making herself a dress for Kwanza--while her mother was in this state was a tribute to her strength.
5. How did she respond to these feelings?	
6. Could a sighted teenage girl have done better?	

7.	Another very stressful thing happened to Muffin in this book. What was it?	A man attacked her with rape in mind.
8.	Did this happen to Muffin because she was blind?	No. THe author clearly makes this point by having Muffin refer to Queenie who also was raped. Muffin would not have been able to avoid the attack if she had been sighted.
9.	This was a terrible experience for Muffin, as it would have been for anyone, but she was able to go to Kwanza, be happy and feel a sense of belonging with other people in spite of it. What made her able to do this?	The support of the people who loved her, particularly Mr. Dale and Ernie, and her basic emotional strength.
10.	At the end of the book what additional evidence do we get of Muffin's strength?	She is determined to help her mother recover, with her love and whatever else it takes. Have two students read chapter 20 out loud, with one reading Muffin's part and one reading Leola's part, while you read the narration.

Supplementary Activities

Composition

(1) Think about blind people you have seen in your neighborhood or elsewhere. What were they doing? What special techniques or equipment were they using to function? What did you think about these people? How did you feel? How did you act? Would you feel or act differently now?

(2) If there is a blind person in your neighborhood, observe that person and write a description of his/her behavior and how you feel about that person.

(3) If you know a blind person well, compare that person to Muffin. Is he/she as independent, intelligent, and well liked? Does he/she have good friends? Is he/she happy?

Killilea, M. _Karen_. New York: Dell, 1960.

For the Teacher

Karen is a biography written at the beginning of the 1950s. Major changes have taken place since then in the way children with disabilities are treated. However, many of the feelings and beliefs about handicapped individuals related in this book are still present today. For this reason, this biography is still quite relevant. In addition, this book offers a marvelous opportunity for classroom exploration of what has changed since the beginning of the 1950s in regard to how society reacts to its handicapped members.

Karen is a story told by a loving mother. It highlights how the presence of a handicapped child may affect a family, in this case a healthy and strong family. This is an "upbeat" story. The people in it don't give up or give in. Karen fights to realize her potential to the fullest. Her parents fight for a better chance for their child and for the physically disabled children of others.

Karen's life would be somewhat better today. She would be able to go to school, probably a neighborhood school, and possibly a class with nonhandicapped peers. There would be more resources for her--preschool programs, camps, social groups. There would be more resources for the family--parent counseling and parent support groups. Even so, there would still be disappointments, exclusion and pain resulting from the disability and the way people react to it. This book is a lesson in coping with such pain, a lesson full of determination, perserverence, hard work and spirit.

Resources for the Teacher

Free Wheeling, 1978. Regional Rehabilitation Research Institute on Attitudinal, Legal and Leisure Barriers, 1828 L Street, N.W., Suite 704, Washington, DC 20036. 50¢.

This pamphlet focuses on attitudinal barriers to physically disabled persons.

What Everyone Should Know About Cerebral Palsy, 1977. United Cerebral Palsy Associations, Inc. 66 East 34th Street, New York, NY 10016. 15¢.

What Is Cerebral Palsy? 1978. United Cerebral Palsy Associations, Inc. (free)

Lesson I

Theme: What it means to have a handicapped child in the family.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to describe the feelings of Karen's parents when they suspected and then learned that Karen had cerebral palsy.
- Students will be able to describe the destructive behavior which Karen's parents experienced at the hands of most of the doctors to which they took their child.
- Students will be able to describe the strengths which Karen's family helped her develop.
- Students will be able to describe the special efforts required of Karen's parents in helping Karen develop fully.

Introducing the Lesson

"Some of you have younger brothers or sisters. Think back to the time when your new brother or sister was born. What kind of a time was it? How did your family feel when the baby was brought home? What did people do?" (Answers may include: excited, happy, nervous, a little jealous. Family members probably stared at the baby, touched her hands and feet, held her, watched as she was diapered.) "When Karen was born her family was excited too and her sister Marie was all prepared to help take care of her; but it was a long time before Karen came home from the hospital. For a long time no one was sure that Karen was going to survive."

Discussion Guide

Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1. Karen's family was delighted when she came home from the hospital. Soon, however, her parents began to get very anxious about her development. What kinds of things that most babies do did Karen not do?	(pp. 22-23) She didn't grasp her foot and put it in her mouth; kick off her blankets; change her position; play with the toys hanging from her crib; splash in the bath; grab a spoon, grasp her bottle.
2. How did Karen's parents feel when they were first told that she probably had cerebral palsy?	Her parents felt disappointed, sad, bitter.
3. What kind of thoughts and hopes had they had for Karen when she was born that now seemed as if they might not come true?	(p.28) They looked forward to Karen being beautiful, intelligent, popular, a good dancer and tennis player, a wife and mother.
4. What did almost all the doctors tell Karen's parents about her condition? Did they give her parents hope that their dreams for Karen might come true?	No. The first specialist gave them no hope at all. Not only did he lead them to believe that Karen would be unable to do much with her body, but he told them that children with cerebral palsy have no intelligence. The next specialist, Dr. A., told them to put Karen in an institution and forget about her because there was nothing that could be done for her.
5. How did Karen's parents react to what the specialists said? Did they give up hope for Karen?	No. They kept taking her to different doctors, trying to find one who would say that Karen could be helped. They saw 24 doctors before they found one who gave them some hope and help.
6. Even after the Killileas found a doctor who said that there was a way of helping Karen, they learned that they could not get Karen into a program which gave this help. Why not?	There were very few such programs. There were long waiting lists for them, and they were very expensive.

7.	What did Karen's parents do about this situation?	They decided to learn how to help Karen themselves, with instruction from Dr. B. and the therapists who worked with him.
8.	After Dr. B. gave Karen's parents hope, they made up a set of rules and thoughts to remember about Karen. What were these ideas and rules?	(p. 55) 1. Karen is a child and has the same needs and desires as other children. 2. Many people whose bodies work well are handicapped in other ways. 3. Karen should never be pitied. 4. Karen should not be over protected. 5. All efforts should be to help Karen become self-respecting and self-supporting.
9.	Why did Karen's parents decide that she should not be pitied or overprotected?	Because if she were pitied and overprotected she would not develop self-respect and independence.
10.	Karen's parents realized that she would never be able to compete with other children physically. They wanted her to have a special skill, something she excelled at. What was the special skill they helped her develop?	Language. While still four or five years old Karen developed a large vocabulary and spoke in adult-like sentences.
11.	What other qualities did Karen have that made people like her?	She was friendly. She had a sense of humor. She loved people.
12.	What kinds of things did Karen's parents have to do to help her that parents of nonhandicapped children don't have to do? In what ways was their daily life more difficult?	They had to carry Karen; do special exercises with her six days a week; take her on long trips to the only doctor they had found who could help her; spend lots of money on medical expenses and special equipment; show a great deal of patience when she was learning to feed and dress herself.

Concluding Statement: "Karen's parents did not give up. They kept searching for a way to help her. When they found a way, they worked at it constantly. Karen could never become a good dancer or tennis player, but her parents' hard work and determination helped her realize her potential to the fullest."

What Is Cerebral Palsy?

Duplicate the quiz which follows and give the students a few minutes to complete it. Then read each question, one at a time, and poll the pupils on their responses. Ask for the rationale behind the answers. If the class cannot agree on a response, or if the wrong response is selected, read the answer and explanation provided.

Fact or Myth

(Answer the questions below by putting an "X" in either the column labeled "Fact" or the column labeled "Myth.")

	FACT	MYTH
1. Cerebral palsy is a brain disorder.		
2. Cerebral palsy affects the muscles.		
3. People with cerebral palsy are usually mentally retarded.		
4. There are different types of cerebral palsy.		
5. Cerebral palsy can interfere with the ability to speak clearly.		
6. Children with cerebral palsy cannot be helped until they are at least five years old.		
7. Parents can do much to help their cerebral palsied children.		
8. Only bad people have cerebral palsied children.		

"Fact or Myth" Answers

1.	Fact.	Cerebral palsy results from damage to the central nervous system (brain).
2.	Fact.	"Palsy" refers to the lack of muscle control that is usually a symptom of this disorder.
3.	False.	At least half the individuals with cerebral palsy have average or better than average intelligence.
4.	Fact.	There are five types of cerebral palsy, each with its own set of symptoms. (See the teacher reference What Everyone Should Know About Cerebral Palsy for a description of these different types.)
5.	Fact.	The muscles involved in producing speech may be affected by this disorder.
6.	False.	The earlier the child is treated the greater the progress possible. Physical therapy, occupational therapy (which deals with the performance of activities of daily living), and speech therapy should all be begun before age five if possible.
7.	Fact.	Even when children with cerebral palsy receive regular professional care, parents can advance their child's progress through daily exercise, emotional support, social activities, etc.
8.	False.	Anyone can have a child with cerebral palsy. It has nothing to do with being good or bad. Cerebral palsy may be caused by prematurity, maternal illness during pregnancy, lack of oxygen during the birth process, etc.

Supplementary Activities

Composition

1. If there is a physically handicapped individual in your family, describe how this affects you. Describe how it affects other members of your family.

or

2. If you had been Karen's sister (or brother) how do you think you would have felt? Would you have felt shame, admiration, jealousy, pity, love?
What would have made you feel these ways?

or

3. This book contains examples of people acting cruelly toward Karen and/or her family, and examples of people misunderstanding the Killilea's behavior toward Karen. Pick one example. Describe what happened. Explain why the people may have acted the way they did. Describe how you might have reacted if you were Mr. or Mrs. Killilea.

Lesson II

Theme: What it is like to be a handicapped person in our society.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to describe three ways in which Karen's rights (and dignity) as a member of society were denied because she was handicapped.
- Students will be able to describe how the above three rights would be met today.

Introducing the Lesson

Read the following passage to the classs.

> "I don't believe it. This is America--the land of equal opportunity." His voice was raw. "What a laugh!" He marched over to the window and turned. "It's a sin--a shame. By God, we haven't spent all this time finding the answer to forfeit it. There must be something, some way--" (p. 53)

Ask the class who said this and to what it referred. (Mr. Killilea said it and he was referring to the limited and expensive programs for helping children with cerebral palsy.) "What year was it when Karen's father made this statement?" (1943) "How long ago was that?" (Students respond.) "Many things have changed since 1943 about the way our society treats individuals with cerebral palsy. Today there are many programs around the country and within every state and every large city for the treatment of children with cerebral palsy. Mr. and Mrs. Killilea played a part in the growth of programs. Unfortunately, some of the cruel and harmful reactions which people showed toward Karen and her family are still present today. Let's look at both what has changed and what has not changed enough."

(Make a transparency of the Fact Sheet which follows and display it on an overhead projector, or make copies of it for distribution to students.)

Fact Sheet

Changes in the Treatment of Individuals with Cerebral Palsy

	1943	1980
1.	Most doctors know little or nothing about cerebral palsy.	Doctors learn about cerebral palsy in medical school.
2.	Most doctors believe that little can be done for children with cerebral palsy.	Most doctors know that children with cerebral palsy can often be taught to walk (or use a wheelchair), talk, read, and do many other things independently.
3.	There are few programs for helping children with cerebral palsy. There are long waiting lists for these programs, and they are expensive.	There are many programs for helping children with cerebral palsy in hospitals, clinics, centers and schools. Government programs pay for the cost of the special treatment if the family cannot afford it. School programs are free.
4.	Most children with cerebral palsy are not included in any school program.	All children with cerebral palsy have the right to go to school. Schools must provide the special help they need.

Discussion Guide

	Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1.	One of the situations that has changed most since 1943 is how doctors react to cerebral palsy.	Distribute or display the fact sheet. Have a student read both columns of #1.
2.	Let's continue looking at the role of doctors.	Have a student read both columns of #2.
3.	If Karen had been born in the late 70s instead of 1939 or so, what would have changed about her story, about her parents' experiences with doctors?	The doctor's would not have told her parents that Karen was hopeless; that she would never be able to do anything; that they should place her in an institution.
4.		Have a student read both columns of #3.
5.	Why do you think there are so many programs today in contrast to the situation in 1943?	Once it was understood that children with cerebral palsy could be helped, parents organized to get that help for their children.
6.		Have a student read both columns of #4.
7.	Why was Karen excluded from school after kindergarten?	Because of the physical strain that toileting and moving Karen about would put on her teacher.
8.	What kind of education was substituted instead?	A small amount of home instruction.
9.	Why was home instruction not as desirable as school instruction?	The number of hours of instruction was very limited. Karen did not have the stimulation of other children learning and sharing with her.

10. How might Karen's education be provided today?	Karen might be in a regular class, using a wheelchair or crutches. If she needed help in toileting, an aide might be provided for this purpose. A special teacher might work with Karen for about an hour a day to give her the extra help she needed in any learning areas. Karen might also have been in a special class for physically handicapped children.
11. How would Karen's life and her family's life have been different if Karen could have gone to school?	Karen would have had the companionship of other children everyday. She would not have been so lonely. Her mother would not have had to plan for every minute of Karen's care. Karen would have been better prepared to function independently of her parents and to deal with the world outside of her family. However, Karen might also have experienced some rejection on the part of other children or adults without the protection of her parents' presence.

Concluding Statement: "We're going to look at some situations in Karen's life and talk about how they were handled, why they were handled that way, and what effect they had on the kind of person Karen was."

Small Group Activity

Divide the class into groups of about eight pupils each. Distribute a copy of the following situations to each group. Select a leader and recorder for each group. Allow about 15 minutes for the groups to work. Then bring the class together again and have the group recorders report on the conclusions of the groups to incident I; then incident II.

Critical Incidents in Karen's Life

I.

I walked down the hall and heard Karen demanding somebody get something and I didn't at all like her tone. As I walked into the room she said in a tone of revolting complacency, "You have to do it for me--I'm crippled."
Mama struck. (p. 230)

Questions:

1. Why did Karen's mother hit her?
2. Was Karen's mother right in doing this?
3. What did Karen's parents do about this afterwards?
4. What was the outcome of this incident?

II.

In an oozy voice the woman said to Karen, "You poor little thing."

Karen pulled her crutches back a few inches and straightened to look at them.

"It must be awful to wear those braces," said the man. Jimmy started toward them but I grabbed his arm.

"Let's let Karen handle this," I whispered.

"You poor child," repeated the woman.

"Why?" asked Karen inquisitively....

"Why-why-well-because--" The woman was obviously off balance. The man took a few backward steps in the direction of the gate.

"I'm lucky," said Karen. "You just don't understand." They stared at her.

"You see," Karen explained patiently, "I can see with my eyes, hear music with my ears, and I can speak as well as anybody. Mom says better than a lot of grown-ups." Crouching a little to keep her balance, she lifted a crutch and waved it. "Good-by." (PP. 247-248)

Questions:

1. What was Karen's father tempted to do? Why?
2. Why did Karen's mother stop him?
3. Was Karen able to handle this situation on her own?
4. What did this show about Karen? (About her parents?)

Supplementary Activities

Readings

Read the pamphlet What Everyone Should Know About Cerebral Palsy. List five facts that you learned from this pamphlet.

Composition

What do you think Karen's life was like when she reached adulthood? Put yourself in Karen's place and write a letter to a friend you haven't seen since childhood. Describe what has happened to you (Karen) between ages 12 and 20.

Extra Credit Assignment

Read the book With Love from Karen. (Killilea, M. New York: Dell, 1963, paper). This is the continuation of the story of Karen into her adulthood. Describe the achievements and the disappointments in Karen's life.

Gill, D. L. T. Tom Sullivan's Adventures in Darkness.
New York: New American Library, 1976. (paper)

For the Teacher

Tom Sullivan's Adventures in Darkness is not an example of a great biography. It is, however, a good nonfictional introduction to blindness for junior high school pupils with fifth to seventh grade reading levels. Tom Sullivan is not a superhero like Helen Keller who had to learn to communicate in spite of deafness as well as blindness. Nor is he as different as Helen Keller. In fact, Tom Sullivan was much like other boys growing up 20 or 30 years ago. He was blind, but he could ride a bike, climb a tree, and explore a "haunted" house with the other kids in the neighborhood. In addition, Tom Sullivan is alive and active today. This book is not a historical tale. While retrolental fibroplasia is much less common today than 30 years ago, in many respects this book is current and up-to-date.

One of the major changes that has occurred recently in regard to the upbringing of blind children is their increasing integration into the mainstream of education. Today blind children who have no other handicaps are being increasingly educated in regular classes, with special help from itinerant teachers or resource teachers. The current picture represents society's recognition of the right of blind children to as normal a life as possible, a right for which Tom Sullivan has been striving throughout his life.

Another characteristic of this book is its many pieces of information on techniques and devices which enable blind persons to function independently. The author inserts so much information that it sometimes overshadows the biographical aspects of this book. However, students will find most of this information quite interesting.

The message which comes across clearly in this book is that blind individuals can lead full, active and happy lives. It stresses Tom Sullivan's abilities and skills. It attacks the misconceptions of blind persons as helpless, dependent and suffering. This is an important image change and reflects an important change in the lives of blind people and society's response to them.*

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*Note: The picture of competence and independence epitomized by Tom Sullivan fits many individuals whose sole disability is blindness. There are, however, an increasing number of multi-handicapped blind persons whose impairments are much more disabling.

Information about Blindness

American Foundation for the Blind
15 West 16th Street, New York, NY 10011

(single copies free)

Products for People with Vision Problems. (illustrated catalogue)

Dickman, I. R. Living with Blindness.

(up to 50 copies free)

Braille Alphabet and Numerals. (6½' x 3¼" card)

Dog Guides for the Blind.

Facts about Blindness.

How Does a Blind Person Get Around?

Louis Braille.

Understanding Braille.

What Do You Do When You See a Blind Person?

The Seeing Eye, Inc.
Morristown, NJ 07960

(single copies free)

Bonnie Tells Her Story As a Seeing Eye Dog (comic book)

If Blindness Occurs.

The Seeing Eye.

Lesson I

Theme: Blind people want to be as much like others as possible.
Blind people can lead full lives.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to identify six activities which Tom Sullivan participated in that many people assume blind people cannot perform.
- Students will be able to identify three kinds of information which people usually obtain visually that Tom was able to acquire through other means.

Introducing the Lesson

Read the following passage to the class:

> Sometimes I would shout at Mom and Dad, "Why can't I see? Why can't I be like Frankie and Tommy Healey? The thing I want most to do in the world, I'll never be able to do. I'll never be any good at any sport except the Sullivan Rules Games."
>
> "You'll just have to accept your blindness and make the best of it," said Mom quietly.
>
> "I won't! I won't!" I yelled, and ran upstairs to my bedroom, where I buried my head in a pillow and screamed with anger. (p. 60)

Ask the students what it was Tom Sullivan meant when he said: "The thing I want most to do in the world, I'll never be able to do." Cue: "What did he most want to do when he made that statement?" (He wanted to be able to engage in sports and compete with his sighted friends.) Tom's mother told him that he had to accept his blindness. What did she mean when she said this? (She meant that there were things he would never be able to do because he was blind.) Tom said he would never accept his blindness. What did he mean? Cue: "Did he mean that he would go to all kinds of doctors to try to become sighted?" (Tom meant that he would never accept a limited, less-than-full life.)

Concluding statement: "At times when Tom Sullivan was a child he hated being blind because it kept him from doing things that other boys could do. He wanted to be like others and he constantly searched for ways of doing things that other people could do. He never accepted the idea that because he was blind he could not have a full life."

Discussion Guide

Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1. Tom Sullivan was determined to live as normal and as full a life as possible. As a child he thought it was great to be accepted as a member of the Greaton Road Gang. What are some of the things he did with this "gang," and with the boys in the Cape Cod town where his family spent their summers?	Rode a tandem bike (a bicyle built for two); explored a "haunted" house; jumped off a high wall into snowdrifts; boxed; took care of injured animals.
2. One of the things that set Tom apart from the other boys was school. Where did Tom go to school? Why didn't he go to school with the other boys?	Tom was sent to a school for the blind. When he was a child, many blind children were sent to special schools to learn the skills they needed to know, like Braille. Most public schools didn't accept blind pupils in those days and didn't have teachers who knew how to teach blind children the special skills they need.
3. Did Tom like going to the Perkins School for the Blind?	No. He hated going to a special school. He didn't want to be away from his family and from the friends he had made. He didn't like being with other blind children only.
4. Today many blind children do not go to special schools. They are educated in the same schools as their neighborhood friends. How do they learn the special skills they need, the kinds of things that Tom was helped to learn at the Perkin's School?	Special teachers work with blind children to teach them the special skills they need. Sometimes blind children are in special classes. However, many blind children go to regular classes and get a few hours of help a week from a special teacher.
5. Tom did not like going to a special school, but he did learn many important things at his school. What are some of the important skills he learned?	He learned to read and write Braille; do mathematical computations with the aid of an abacus; learned geography through raised maps; learned to move about safely (mobility training).

6.	Because he could not use vision to find out about the world, Tom Sullivan learned to use his other senses very effectively. Give examples of how he used his sense of hearing more effectively than most sighted people.	(a) He was able to steer a boat safely back to a pier by listening to the sound of a foghorn.* (b) He was able to identify people underwater by the sound of the bubbles they made. (c) He followed the sound of a robin singing to get out of an abandoned house. (d) He identified people by the sound of their footsteps.
7.	What did Tom Sullivan learn through touch that most sighted people learn through vision?	(a) From a handshake he had an impression of how a person felt toward him, and how heavy and tall he was. (b) By feeling the stuffed animals in a museum he was able not only to learn their size and shape, but also why people feel certain ways (e.g., afraid) about them.
8.	In his adolescence and adulthood Tom learned to participate in many sports that most people think are not for the blind. What were some of these sports?	Waterskiing*, horseback riding, swimming, wrestling, golf, boating, basketball, bowling.
9.	In most of these sports Tom was able to participate with some additions or modifications of the usual procedure. What kinds of modifications were made?	Usually, adding sound cues as substitutes for visual cues, and/or getting guidance from a sighted companion.
10.	Some of the sports that Tom got involved in, such as sky diving, are considered dangerous even for sighted people. Why did he do things like sky diving?	To prove that he wasn't a helpless invalid and to add more dimensions to his life.

Concluding statement: "Tom Sullivan never accepted the idea that he had to lead a sheltered, limited life. He was always looking for ways to make his life fuller and richer."

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*Note: Tom Sullivan is an extremely competent (and daring) blind person. Some of the skills he has mastered are not activities which most blind persons can perform.

Supplementary Activities

Readings

(1) Read the pamphlet How Does a Blind Person Get Around? List three important facts which you learned from this pamphlet about the mobility of blind persons.

(2) Read the pamphlet Dog Guides for the Blind. Explain why dog guides are not appropriate for all blind persons.

(3) (For good readers.) Read the pamphlet Understanding Braille. Prepare a five minute report to the class on Braille. As part of your report write a sentence using Braille dot formations to show to your classmates.

Composition

Suppose you were Tom Sullivan, looking back at your experience of going to a special school for the blind. Describe your feelings both (a) When you were first sent to the Perkins School, and (b) at the time that you were almost ready to leave. (Since Tom Sullivan can only write Braille or dictate on tape, you may want to present your composition on a audio-cassette tape.)

Using Senses Other Than Vision

Tom Sullivan was able to learn much about people through the senses of touch, movement and hearing. Test your ability to get information about people without relying on your vision. While one student is blindfolded, have another student from the class walk up to him and shake his hand. What can be learned from the handshake and the sound of the student's footsteps? Can his/her (approximate) height and weight be determined? Can the sex of the student be identified? Repeat the experiment using the same blindfolded student but a different student to be identified. Then blindfold another student and ask her to report on what she can learn about two different students without using her vision.
Have the class draw some conclusions about the reliance of sighted persons upon vision; about the potential of learning through other senses; and about Tom Sullivan's skill in gathering information from senses other than vision.

Lesson II

Theme: What can blind people become?

Objectives:

- Students will be able to identify common misconceptions about blind persons and point out why they are false.
- Students will be able to identify adult roles which blind persons can assume.

Introducing the Lesson

Tell the class: "Many people have false ideas about blind people. Let's see if we can state some of these false ideas or misconceptions and see what's wrong with them.

Try to forget what you've read about Tom Sullivan, and think of all of the ideas and feelings that people might have when they hear the word "blind." Cue: "How did you feel in the past when you saw or heard about a blind person?" (Common associations to blindness include: helpless, pity, dependent, unhappy, useless, uncomfortable, fear, misery.) "Are blind people helpless and unhappy?" (Some blind people are, mostly because they were brought up to believe that there was very little they could do, and they never learned to do things for themselves.) "Does Tom Sullivan fit this picture of someone who is helpless, dependent, useless and unhappy?" (Not at all, although in childhood he was at times very upset at not being able to do things that other children could.)

Concluding statement: "In the past many blind persons were dependent and unhappy because they led very limited lives. Today blind persons are being taught to do things for themselves, and to believe that they can lead full and useful lives. Today many blind people are, in fact, leading rich and happy lives."

Discussion Guide

	Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1.		Read the passage below to the class. Patty's parents and brothers were worried by the thought of Patty's marrying a blind man. Like so many people, they believed that a blind person was a helpless invalid. (p. 120)
2.	What were some of Patty's father's concerns about Tom?	He thought that Tom's children would be blind. He also thought that Tom would not be able to support Patty.
3.	Why else might he have been unhappy at the idea of Tom marrying Patty?	He probably thought that there were a great many things that Tom couldn't do, and that Patty would have to do all these things instead, as well as helping Tom in many ways.
4.	Was this true? Did Patty have to do many things for Tom?	Tom did depend on her in some ways. For example, since he could not drive a car, he relied on Patty to drive him to various places. However, after Patty became pregnant he got a guide dog and began going places on his own, using other means of transportation. Patty still probably had to do some things that the wife of a sighted man may not have had to do, but the difference is not nearly as great as her father would have thought. Obviously, for Patty this additional bit of effort was a small price to pay for a relationship that was so important.
5.	Tom Sullivan was able to be a husband to a sighted wife. He also became a father. When this book was written his children were very young. Today Blythe is a school girl. How do you think she and Tommy feel about having a blind father?	Some of the students may have been frightened by the incident of Blythe falling in the pool and almost drowning. This should be discussed in terms of Tom needing to be more cautious with a three year old near a swimming pool. Even if he had been sighted the incident would have occurred and Blythe would have had to have been rescued. He should not have answered the telephone without holding onto Blythe. There may be

other situations where he will have to maintain more physical contact with his young children than a sighted father would. On the other hand, Tom Sullivan probably gives a great deal to his children, and has a sense of closeness with them that some sighted fathers don't.

Allow the students to express their feelings. Some reference should, however, be made to all the kinds of things that Tom Sullivan can do and enjoy with his children.

6. Tom Sullivan became a husband, a father and a musician. There are several popular singers who are blind. What kind of work do blind people do if they don't want to be or can't be musicians?

After the students have had a chance to respond, have one of them read the passage below to the class.

> Not so long ago it was thought that blind people should be given "sheltered employment," and most blind people worked at things like basket weaving or piano tuning, or else they became telephone operators.
>
> But now blind people hold a great variety of jobs. These are many who are successful lawyers, stockbrokers, teachers...businessmen and women, psychologists and radio announcers. (p. 82)

7. How many of you thought that a blind person could be a lawyer or a teacher? How could a blind person function as a lawyer? How could he/she be able to search through all the volumes of law he/she would need to study?

Reference materials can be transcribed into Braille or recorded on tape. (There are Braille transcription services as well as services which record material on tape.) A blind person would also need the assistance of a reader--someone who would read aloud to him material which was not available in Braille or in recorded form and which he needed quickly. There are also machines which change printed material into speech, and other machines which change printed materials into letters which the blind person touches with his/her fingers.

8.	How could a blind person function as a teacher? What would have to be done differently?	The teacher would have to rely more on pupils, using them as her/his assistants, or there would have to be an assistant teacher.

Concluding statement: "Today, many blind individuals are husbands and wives, boyfriends and girlfriends, fathers and mothers. They have roles as computer programmers, insurance agents, mathematicians and social workers. The old picture of the helpless and pitiful blind person has little to do with them."

Supplementary Activites

Readings

(1) Read the pamphlet What Do You Do When You See a Blind Person? Make a chart of six rules for relating to blind people you meet.

(2) Study the catalogue Products for People with Vision Problems. Describe three pieces of adapted equipment in the catalogue. Explain how each item works.

Composition

Suppose that you were Tom Sullivan on a typical day in his adult life. Describe his experiences during that day. Include descriptions of what he does, how he does it and how he feels about it.

Film

AS A BLIND PERSON
color - 30 min. - 1975
Tells the story of Bill Schmidt who was born blind and is now the principal of an elementary school in California.
American Foundation for the Blind - 15 West 16th Street, New York, NY 10011
Rental $30.00 - Purchase $175.00

POEMS ABOUT DEAFNESS

"You Have To Be Deaf To Understand"*
Willard J. Madsen

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*May be ordered from Gallaudet College Bookstore, Gallaudet College, Washington, DC 20002. (#0717....75¢ plus 75¢ for postage and handling.)

For the Teacher

Deafness is in some ways a profound disability. It robs the deaf child of the opportunity to communicate the way most other people do. Unless the deaf child is born to deaf parents who use sign language, the child will probably pass through his early years without an adequate means of expression for his needs, ideas and questions. Moreover, his deafness will cut him off from a whole wealth of interactions with his hearing parents and other family members.

Speech is something which hearing children acquire naturally. It is something which a deaf child must struggle to acquire, even with excellent instruction. Understanding the speech of others remains a struggle for deaf people throughout their lives. Even the best speech reader (lip reader) understands only a fraction of what is said in most situations. The strain of trying to understand, the embarrassment of misunderstanding, and the impatience or discomfort of those who are misunderstood, are the hurts which Willard J. Madsen is expressing in this poem. Madsen is also making a plea for understanding of the role which manual communication plays in the lives of some deaf persons.

The question of whether deaf children should be taught manual communication has divided the field of deaf education for years. For a long time deaf children were prohibited from using manual communication because it was felt that it made the acquisition of speech more problematic. Today most deaf educators accept the idea that manual communication is essential for some deaf individuals. However, disagreements still exist about when and for whom it should be sanctioned.

Information on Deafness

Pamphlet

Hearing Loss: Hope Through Research. Bethesda: National Institute Of Health, 1977.

(Single copies may be obtained free by writing to: Office of Scientific and Health Reports, NICDS, National Institute of Health, Bethesda, MD 20014)

Biography

Spradley, T. S. & Spradley, J. P. Deaf Like Me. New York: Random House, 1978.

This is a beautiful story of parents striving to find the best way to help their deaf child understand the world and communicate with the people in her life.

D

Lesson Plan

Theme: What it is like to be deaf in a hearing world.

Objective:

- .Students will be able to describe some of the problems in communication which a deaf individual experiences in a hearing world.

Introducing the Lesson

Tell the students that they are going to read a poem which begins with the line, "What is it like to 'hear' a hand?" Write the line on the chalkboard. Ask them if they can imagine (guess, figure out) what is meant by "hear" a hand? Some of the pupils may allude to hearing noises that can be produced with the hand, e.g., finger snapping, clapping, hitting. Respond by saying that the poet was not referring to the sounds that the hand makes. What else might he mean? If the students don't make reference to using hands to communicate as in manual communication, read the next line to the class. Ask the pupils if that gave anyone a different idea of what the poet meant by "hearing" a hand. If none of the pupils gives a correct response, hand out copies of the poem "You Have to be Deaf to Understand" while telling the pupils that the answer is in the poem. Have the pupils read the poem silently to themselves. If the pupils figure out the correct answer, affirm that response and tell the class to read the poem to find out more about this subject.

Discussion Guide

(If students have figured out the meaning of the first stanza, begin with question #3.)

Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1. Now that you have read the whole poem how many of you understand what the poet meant by the first line?	The poet was referring to the use of the hand in manual communication, i.e., sign language and finger spelling. What he meant by the first line is that the hand is the instrument for communication for some deaf people. They see words as the hand expresses them, the way other people hear words.
2. What did he mean?	
3. What is the theme of this poem? (What is the author [poet] telling us in this poem?)	The author is describing the difficulties in communication which a deaf person has in a hearing world.
4. Let's examine these difficulties. What kind of difficulty is being described in the second stanza?	The difficulty a young deaf child has in understanding what a teacher says.
5. What is the third stanza referring to? What is the problem?	Learning to speak.
6. Why is this a problem for a deaf child?	Because we need to hear words to know how to produce the right sound.
7. How was the teacher trying to teach the deaf child to speak?	The teacher was using her hands to shape the child's mouth correctly for the sound to be produced.
8. What is meant by "mumbo-jumbo?"	"Mumbo-jumbo" means senseless and confusing. The deaf child could not understand the meaning or use of what the teacher was doing. The deaf child did not know that what he was being asked to do with his mouth and throat would give him a way of expressing his needs and ideas.

9. In the next stanza why did the brother or sister or friend not tell the deaf child what he wanted to know? Why did they say, "Never mind!"?	Because it was hard to explain something to the deaf child through speech. He probably could only understand part of what was being said. It probably would take a lot of time and patience to help him understand. Because hearing people are so used to communicating easily, his brother or sister or friend might not have been willing to work at helping him understand.
10. In the fifth stanza the deaf child is being punished. Why?	For communicating to another deaf child with his hands. In some schools for the deaf, children were punished for using sign language because it was thought that the use of sign language would interfere with the learning of speech.
11. What problems does the author refer to in the next stanza?	Being shouted at by people who mistakenly think this will enable the deaf person to hear. Being unable to grasp the point of a joke because he can't understand the words.
12. In the next stanza (#7) what is meant by "the words were misread?"	The author is referring to speech reading (lip reading), the process of figuring out what is being said by watching the movements of the mouth, as well as facial expressions, and by using context clues.
13. Why is a deaf person who speech reads (lip reads) likely to misunderstand some of what is being said?	There are many sounds that involve the same lip movements. It is impossible to distinguish them from one another by watching mouth movements alone. Examples: t, d, n; p, b, m.
14. What source of stress is alluded to in the eighth stanza?	Not being able to have a telephone conversation independently.
15. What new problem is referred to in the next stanza?	Feelings of being alone, lonely and isolated in the company of hearing persons.

16. What situation is difficult in the tenth stanza?	Entering situations where you will have to communicate with people you don't know.
17. How is the next stanza different from the others?	The tone is different. It expresses belongingness and pleasure, while the others express tension, aloneness, and stress. It is about understanding rather than misunderstanding, about a form of communication the person feels comfortable with rather than one with which he feels uncomfortable and inadequate.
18. The poet says "You have to be deaf to understand." Then why did he write this poem? Is he saying that only deaf people will understand it? Was it meant only for deaf people?	No. What he means is that deaf persons will instantly understand what is being expressed. They will recognize the struggle to acquire speech, the feelings of aloneness, of inadequacy, the fears and hurts as their own. Hearing people will have to work to understand these experiences, and will probably never feel them with the same impact as a deaf person who has lived through them.
19. Then why should hearing people bother to read this poem?	(a) For the same reason that we read any poem--to gain new insights into people and events, to enrich our understanding of how people feel and perceive things. (b) Because if we understand how deaf people feel we may modify the way we act so as to make it a little easier, a little less stressful and lonely for deaf people to live in a hearing world.

Supplementary Activities

Writing

1. Think about the role that the telephone plays in your life. Keep a list of why and how you used the telephone during a two or three day period. Describe how your life would be affected if you could not communicate by telephone.

2. Try an experiment with a friend. For one hour, have your friend "talk" to you by mouthing words rather than saying them out loud. Write a poem to express how you felt.

Reading (For honors classes)

Read the poem "Mutterings Over the Crib of a Deaf Child" by James Wright.* Answers the questions below.

1. Why did the poet place quotation marks around every other stanza?
   (What is the relationship between the stanzas with quotation marks and the stanzas not in quotation marks?)
2. What concerns are expressed in this poem about how the deaf baby will be able to function?
3. What kind of responses are given to these concerns?
4. Who might be expressing these concerns and responses?
5. What is the tone this poem communicates?
6. What kind of feeling are you left with after you have read this poem?

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*In J. Wright. Collected Poems. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University, 1971.

Demonstration

If there is a program for hearing impaired pupils in the school ask the teacher of this program whether she, or any of the pupils in the program, could teach the signs for some common objects and actions to your class. If there is no program for hearing impaired students in the school, find out whether any of the hearing pupils in your school, or their parents, can use sign language and would be willing to demonstrate some signs. (Family members of deaf persons may be able to use sign language even though they, themselves, are not hearing impaired.)

YOU HAVE TO BE DEAF TO UNDERSTAND

by Willard J. Madsen

What is it like to "hear" a hand?
You have to be deaf to understand!

What is it like to be a small child,
In a school, in a room void of sound—
With a teacher who talks and talks and talks;
And then when she does come around to you,
She expects you to know what she's said?
You have to be deaf to understand.

Or the teacher who thinks that to make you smart,
You must first learn how to talk with your voice;
So mumbo-jumbo with hands on your face
For hours and hours without patience or end,
Until out comes a faint resembling sound?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to be curious,
To thirst for knowledge you can call your own,
With an inner desire that's set on fire—
And you ask a brother, sister, or friend
Who looks in answer and says, "Never mind!"?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like in a corner to stand,
Though there's nothing you've done really wrong,
Other than try to make use of your hands
To a silent peer to communicate
A thought that comes to your mind all at once?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to be shouted at
When one thinks that will help you to hear;
Or misunderstand the words of a friend
Who is trying to make a joke clear,
And you don't get the point because he's failed?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to be laughed in the face
When you try to repeat what is said;
Just to make sure that you've understood,
And you find that the words were misread—
And you want to cry out, "Please help me, friend!"?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to have to depend
Upon one who can hear to phone a friend;
Or place a call to a business firm
And be forced to share what's personal, and,
Then find that your message wasn't made clear?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to be deaf and alone
In the company of those who can hear—
And you only guess as you go along,
For no one's there with a helping hand,
As you try to keep up with words and song?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like on the road of life
To meet with a stranger who opens his mouth—
And speaks out a line at a rapid pace;
And you can't understand the look in his face
Because it is new and you're lost in the race?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to comprehend
Some nimble fingers that paint the scene,
And make you smile and feel serene
With the "spoken word" of the moving hand
That makes you part of the world at large?
You have to be deaf to understand.

What is it like to "hear" a hand?
Yes, you have to be deaf to understand!

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MUTTERINGS OVER THE CRIB OF A DEAF CHILD

James Wright

"How will he hear the bell at school
Arrange the broken afternoon,
And know to run across the cool
Grasses where the starlings cry,
Or understand the day is gone?"

Well, someone lifting curious brows
Will take the measure of the clock.
And he will see the birchen boughs
Outside sagging dark from the sky,
And the shade crawling upon the rock.

"And how will he know to rise at morning?
His mother has other sons to waken,
She has the stove she must build to burning
Before the coals of the nighttime die;
And he never stirs when he is shaken."

I take it the air affects the skin,
And you remember, when you were young,
Sometimes you could feel the dawn begin,
And the fire would call you, by and by,
Out of the bed and bring you along.

"Well, good enough. To serve his needs
All kinds of arrangements can be made.
But what will you do if his finger bleeds?
Or a bobwhite whistles invisibly
And flutes like an angel off in the shade?"

He will learn pain. And, as for the bird,
It is always darkening when that comes out.
I will putter as though I had not heard,
And lift him into my arms and sing
Whether he hears my song or not.

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University Press.

POEMS ABOUT PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENT

"The Baseball Manager and the Warm-up Jacket"

"Days of Memory"

In B. L. Stafford, An Obscured Radiance.
El Paso, TX: Endeavors in Humanity Press, 1978

For the Teacher

Two poems are addressed in the lesson which follows, both of them written by the same person. Bart Lanier Stafford III has cerebral palsy. His poems are an expression of his feelings and experiences. Often, as in these two poems, his physical disability is a central part of these experiences.

"The Baseball Manager and the Warm-up Jacket" is a direct expression of the hurts and adaptations of a physically handicapped boy. Being a regular team member was not possible. Being the "manager" made him feel important. He thought he was accepted. He thought he really belonged. He learned otherwise. The official team jacket was not for him. The jacket he bought himself was not the same. It didn't buy him a place on the team. This poem will be easily understood by junior high school pupils

In "Days of Memory" the same theme is repeated, but pupils will need more help in understanding this poem. The images are less obvious in meaning to someone not knowledgeable about disabilities. It is also a richer poem, ranging over a broader expanse of thoughts.

The information about disabilities which teachers need in helping students understand these poems is largely provided in the "Notes to the Teacher" section of the discussion guide in the lesson.

Additional Resources for the Teacher

United Cerebral Palsy Associations, Inc.
66 East 34th Street, New York, NY 10016

(single copies free)

Cerebral Palsy--Facts and Figures

What is Cerebral Palsy

National Easter Seal Society for Crippled Children and Adults
2023 West Ogden Avenue, Chicago, IL 60612

(single copies free)

When You see in Your School a New Student Who has a Physical Disability

Lesson Plan

Theme: What it feels like to grow up with a physical disability.

Objectives:

- Students will identify two ways in which the author's physical disability limited or hurt him.
- Students will identify three ways in which other people limited or hurt the author because of his disability.
- Students will identify two adaptations which the author made to the limitations imposed upon him by his disability and people's responses to it.

Introducing the Lesson:

"Think back to the years when you were in elementary school. Was there ever a time when you were left out of what the other children were doing? Can you recall how you felt?" Have a few students describe the situations and the feelings associated with them.

"The two poems we are going to read today are about the memories of a person with a physical disability on being left out of many things during his childhood."

Have the students read the poem "The Baseball Manager and the Warm-Up Jacket" to themselves.

Discussion Guide: The Baseball Manager and the Warm-Up Jacket

Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1. What is this poem about?	Students may describe the situation. This is fine, but the important response to elicit is that it's about being left out, about not belonging.
2. Why was the author not a regular team member?	Students may not be able to answer this question because the only reference to the author's disability is the word "spastic" which they may not understand.

3.	What does the author mean when he refers to himself as a "small spastic kid?"	Write the word "spastic" on the chalkboard. Spastic is a term sometims used to mean an individual with cerebral palsy. This term refers to the most common type of cerebral palsy.
4.	The author of this poem has cerebral palsy. How may that physical disability have affected what he could do.	He probably could not hit or catch a ball that was thrown to him in the usual way. He probably could not run quickly.
5.	What way did the author devise to participate in ball games with the other boys?	He chased balls, picked up bats, distributed towels.
6.	The author of this poem refers to himself as the "manager" of the team. Was he the manager? (What other name might be used to describe his role?)	A baseball manager directs the team. He makes important decisions which govern player actions. The author was not really the manager. "Bat boy" might be a more appropriate title for the activities he undertook.
7.	Why then did the author refer to himself as the "baseball manager?"	It was his way of making himself feel important.
8.	How do you think the team members felt about the boy Bart Stafford?	They tolerated his hanging around to do the menial chores. They accepted him in an inferior status role. They did not accept him as their equal. Thus he did not get the team jacket. They did not actively want to hurt him, and they probably felt some guilt over not allowing him to have the team jacket, so they didn't make any reference to the jacket he bought.
9.	Forty years later the author still remembers the hurt of being denied that jacket, and now he is telling about that hurt. What do you think Bart Stafford might have said 40 years ago, if he had dared to say anything?	He might have said: Why don't you accept me? In my own way I am a member of the team even though I don't hit or catch the balls. I put as much effort into my role as anyone. I do things that need doing. I help you. I share each loss and each win with you. Must I be penalized twice by my disability?; first by being unable to play, and then by being rejected because I cannot play. Why do you hurt me this way?

Supplementary Activities

Dramatization

Suppose that the author had expressed his feelings about not getting a jacket to the other boys. Have the students prepare scripts for a dramatization of the interaction between Bart Stafford and the other boys after they had received their baseball jackets. The scripts may be written individually or by small groups of students working together. Select one or two scripts to be acted out by the pupils. The scripts should be selected to represent several different points of view on the situation.

After each dramatization ask the students:

(a) Was the conflict resolved?
(b) What was the likely effect of the interaction on Bart Stafford?
(c) What was the likely effect of the interaction on the other team members?

Have the students read the poem "Days of Memory" to themselves.

Discussion Guide: Days of Memory

	Teacher Statements and Questions	Notes to the Teacher
1.	In the poem "Days of Memory" the author recalls experiences filled with efforts to do what other children do. In what kinds of situations did he have to put forth unusual effort to be able to do what other children did? (Cue: What does he mean by the phrase "words crippled" in the fourth verse?)	Running freely and happily around a grassy yard. Running was not an easy activity for him. He could not do it without thought, with little effort. He probably had to concentrate to keep his balance so that he would not fall. Reading out loud in Sunday school. Speaking clearly was probably another activity that required concentrated effort. He referred to his words as being crippled just as people undoubtedly referred to him as being crippled.
2.	Bart Stafford also recalls painful experiences from his childhood. What were these?	Months of teasing. Being excluded from school. (If the author were a child today he could not be excluded from school.)
3.	How did the author fulfill his zest for living?	Mostly vicariously through hours and hours of reading. Also through movies. Read the line "Insatiable appetite for vicarious life" from the eleventh stanza. Ask the students to explain what was meant by this.
4.	In the poem is a section which reflects the advice or directions given to the author when he was a child by, most likely, his parents. Find that section. What kind of guidelines was he given?	Stanzas 16 and 17. Have a student read the guidelines out loud. "Don't salivate, grimace, fall down, slow a fast world, and don't make scenes!...give much more than you get, always smile and laugh even if it hurts."

5. What does this advice amount to (or mean)?	Try to be like everyone else. Limit or control the ways in which you are different because of your disability, and be super nice so that people may like you in spite of your unpleasant disability manifestations.
6. What effect do you think this advice had upon the author?	It probably reinforced his feelings of inferiority and prevented him from feeling free to express any negative feelings, even when they were justified.
7. If you had to sum up how the author feels about his life, what would you say?	There were too many struggles and disappointments; not enough joys or realizations of hopes and ambitions.

Supplementary Activities

Poetry

Write a brief poem to Bart Stafford to communicate to him how you feel about his experiences, his life, and/or his poem.

Composition

Imagine that you are the parent of a child with cerebral palsy like Bart Stafford. Write a letter to your son (daughter) who is entering adolescence to help guide him/her toward a full and rich life.

The Baseball Manager and the Warm-up Jacket

by Bart L. Stafford III

In high school in Brooklyn
I was the baseball manager,
proud as I could ever be.

I chased baseballs,
gathered thrown bats,
handed out the towels.

It was very important work
for a small spastic kid,
but I was a team member.

When the team got
their warm-up jackets,
I didn't get one.

Only the regular team
got these jackets, and
surely not the manager.

Eventually I bought my own,
but it was dark blue while
the official ones were green.

Nobody ever said anything
to me about my blue jacket;
the guys were my friends.

Yet it hurt me all year
to wear that blue jacket
among all those green ones.

Even now, forty years after,
I still recall that jacket
and the memory goes on hurting.

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"Days of Memory"

by Bart L. Stafford III

The days of a lifetime
blend together lazily,
ragged patchwork sewed
by a blind seamstress.

Out of those days, those
thousands of days, only a few
minutes remain intact for mind's
remembrances of joys and sorrows.

A picnic in the park,
rich kids' front yard,
trying hard to run in
happy grassy freedom.

A fight in downstairs hall after
months of senseless teasing, the
hated head banging on mailboxes,
A shining moment of unexpected power.

Reciting in Sunday School,
words crippled, barely heard,
one verse skipped, forgotten,
yet winning another Bible.

The ball games on the block,
always providing ball and bats
to make certain that I got
a place on one of the teams.

Waiting stolidly, patiently at my window
for the school kids to be given release,
spirit always imprisoned within my body,
forever with torn knees, ripped trousers.

Schooling for me beyond asking,
no one daring the first movement,
everyone seeing only difficulty
and burdens and ultimate failure.

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Days pass, meld into a bleak mosaic,
quilt's colors fading with the years,
weaker, more indistinct, the fabric.
thinner, damaged, mended in places.

Years go, grey years, orange years,
triumphs, failures, some unspoiled
by falls or bleeding or rejections,
movie years, ballgame days, reading.

Reading! My God, the books, the words!
Insatiable appetite for vicarious life,
for understanding of what made this country,
this world, what it now appears to me to be.

A book a day, grinding them out as if
a quota had to be met, so many pages
in so many hours, nobody quite
understanding my need, but obliging.

I was always a creature of my age;
my world began with Dreiser, Upton
Sinclair, Sinclair Lewis, Broun,
Shaw, with Balzac a huge concession.

Books made the only sense I saw,
a beginning, middle and end;
not like life or people, who had
no organization, no plot, no logic.

Where did they all go, the hopes
impossible to achieve, the fires
of ambition cooled, the flaring
genious overpowered, submerged, lost?

All the struggle wasted now, with
demands impossible to fulfill; don't
salivate, grimace, fall down, slow a
fast world, and don't make scenes!

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Above all, give much more than you get,
always smile and laugh even if it hurts.
Maybe, with all this, people won't notice,
perhaps, despite everything, people will like you.

This has all gone into the faded
patchwork sewed by a blind seamstress,
the quilt threadbare and discolored,
soon to be lost, discarded forever.

Only the peaks of the mountain remains,
the memory fading with the years,
only the vallevs of defeats linger,
the dry plains of soiled disillusion.

The shining lights of success,
a contest won, a plaque earned,
friendships cemented, bills paid,
clippings from magazines, papers,

Is this all that a life contains?
Can this be all worth remembering?
Saner minds than mine must answer.
For I, simple soul, only say, "Quen-sabe?"

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